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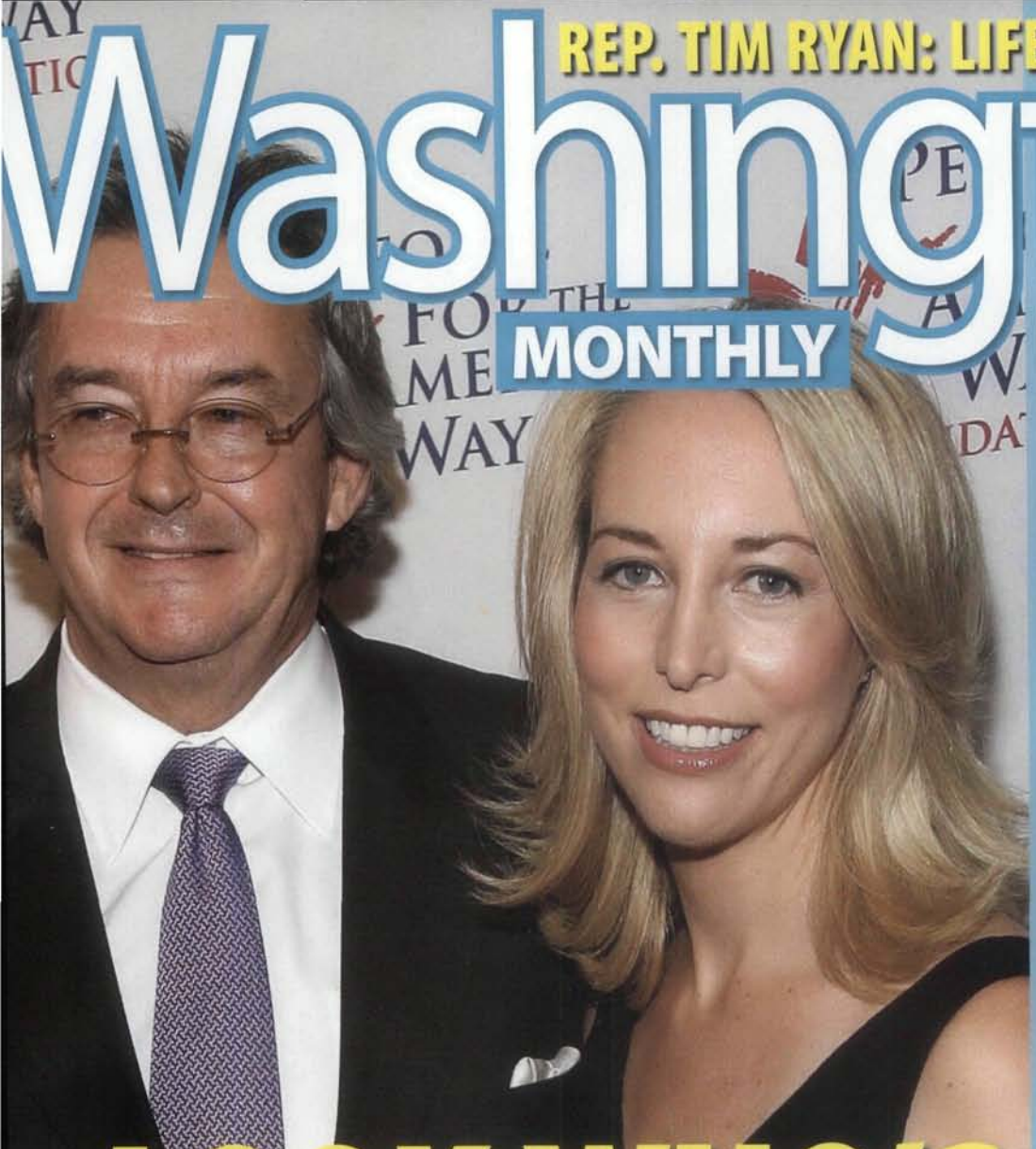
Washington MONTHLY



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The secret lives of WASHINGTON'S POWER COUPLES!

by T. A. Frank

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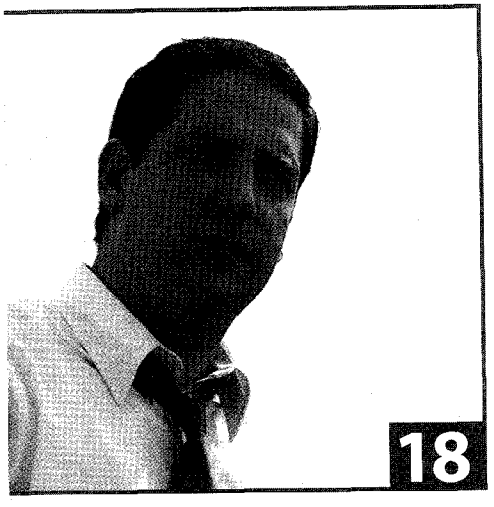

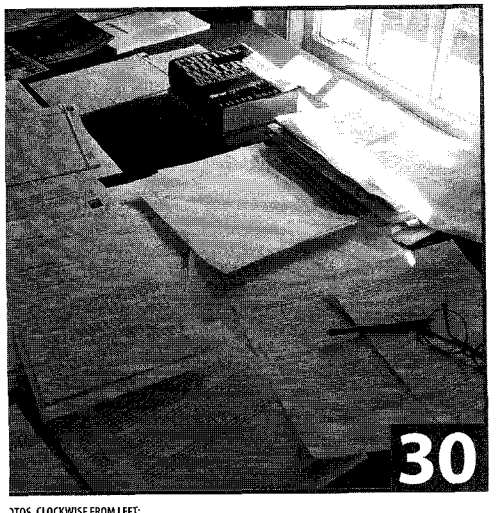

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ges; Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP Photo; *Washington Life*; Getty Images

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Editor's Note

PAUL GLASTRIS

What Hillary Gets (I Hope)

In 1994, the *New Republic* asked me to write an article about the Clinton administration's "reinventing government" (REGO) initiative. REGO, you may recall, was the campaign spearheaded by Vice President Al Gore to improve the performance of federal agencies by encouraging innovation within the bureaucracy. It was widely considered by the national press corps to be the world's second most boring story, right behind the trade dispute over Canadian softwood lumber. But I was actually excited about the assignment. As an alumnus of the *Washington Monthly*, I'd internalized Charlie Peters's neoliberal prime directive (see "A Neoliberal Education," page 30)—that a journalist who believes in a strong federal government should go to the front lines of that government and report back honestly on what he finds.

The department I decided to look at was Veterans Affairs. If REGO was the second most boring story in the world, then the VA had to be considered the second most boring federal agency, right behind the Office of Personnel Management. But it was also, with more than 200,000 employees, the largest nondefense department in government and hence an important one. At the time, the VA was known for vast inefficiency (scores of facilities across the country were sitting half empty) and poor service (a reputation captured in the 1989 Tom Cruise film *Born on the Fourth of July*, about a wounded Vietnam vet who receives nightmarish care at a veterans' hospital). If REGO could make a difference at the VA, I figured, there might really be something to it.

So on a cool fall day I made my way to what I'd heard was a promising REGO experiment: the Central Region Contract Service Center, located on the campus of the Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center in Milwaukee. The center was housed in a converted Civil War–era domiciliary amid the rolling hills of a military cemetery. Inside, contract officers and a government attorney spent their days negotiating with private vendors for everything from bedsheets to ambulance services on behalf of eight VA hospitals in the upper Midwest. Previously, such work had been done by purchasing agents at each individual hospital, the documents often having to be sent to lawyers at VA headquarters in Washington for final approval. The idea of the service center was to centralize the contracting (buying in bulk to garner lower prices) and to decentralize the decision making (having the legal work done on-site to speed up the process).

After some days of reporting, I determined that the center seemed to be working. Vendors loved being able to deal with one purchasing office rather than eight. Hospital nurses loved the quicker and more predictable delivery, which meant they could spend less time hording supplies and more time caring for patients. And the VA was beginning to save money. Though the center had enemies within the bureaucracy—especially civil servants at headquarters whose authority had been usurped, and purchasing agents at the eight hospitals whose jobs were threatened—the bottom line, I wrote, was that this reinventing government experiment at the VA looked like a real success.

Turns out I didn't know the half of it. That same year, Clinton appointed Dr. Kenneth Kizer, a physician, public health expert, and registered Republican, to run the entire VA hospital system. Kizer was given free reign to make sweeping changes, and he did so, cleverly. To build political support for shuttering underutilized hospitals, he cut a special deal with the Office of Management and Budget, whereby the VA could keep a portion of the proceeds from the downsizing. He then promised veterans' groups that opposed closing hospitals that he'd spend part of the money on projects their members wanted, like new ambulatory care facilities. He plowed the rest of the money into an innovative information system that could electronically keep track of every aspect of a patient's care and make those records available to any VA doctor or nurse anywhere in the country with the click of a mouse. He used that system to identify best practices, reduce medical errors, and generally reorganize the entire VA caregiving operation around better managing the chronic illnesses of the aging veterans who make up the bulk of the VA's patients.

Kizer's efforts are chronicled in a new book by Phillip Longman, *Best Care Anywhere*—a book that began as a cover story in the *Washington Monthly* (January/February 2005). Those efforts, Longman shows, so completely transformed the VA that it now outperforms every other sector of the American health care system. Elderly VA patients have longer life expectancies than Medicare patients who choose managed care. VA hospitals earn higher ratings from the National Committee for Quality Assurance than Massachusetts General Hospital and the Mayo Clinic. And the VA achieved all this while spending less per patient than the average American consumes in health care dollars per year, even though VA patients tend to be older and sicker.

Reading Longman's book left me with four strong reactions. The first is irritation at myself for not having stuck with the VA story, and hence missing its turnaround. (Had I known, I could have slipped stories of the VA's comeback into Clinton's speeches when I later worked for him.) The second is a rekindled fury

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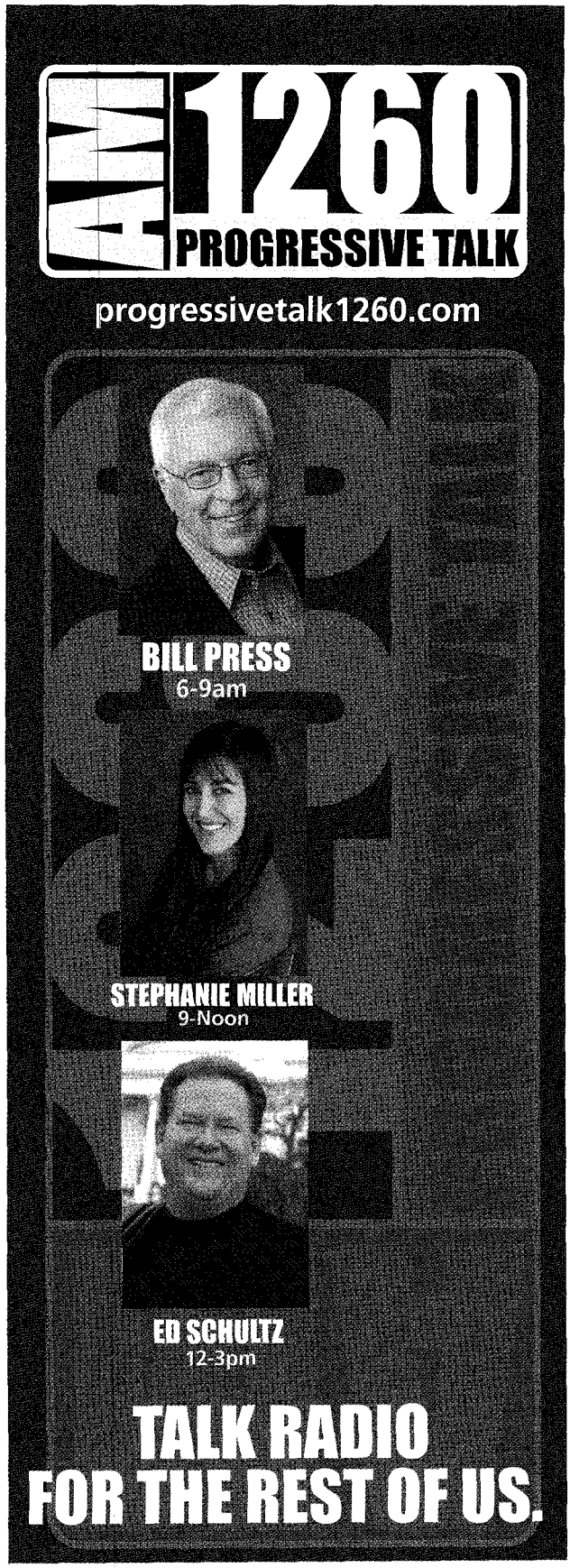

that the Supreme Court chose George W. Bush, and not Al Gore, in 2000. Imagine if, over the past six years, we'd had someone in the Oval Office with the passion and know-how to improve the performance of government agencies by bringing out the best in career employees, rather than someone who has routinely put incompetent political cronies in top positions and treated career experts with contempt. (Given how many hospital beds his Iraq policies are filling, Bush is lucky that Clinton left him with a VA in such good shape.)

The third feeling is one of profound hope that in the VA we finally have the right model to achieve universal health care. As Longman argues elsewhere in this issue (see "Misdiagnosed," page 59), the private health care system is enormously expensive and not so great at keeping people healthy. Yet most universal health care proposals envision bringing the uninsured into that system. Why not instead create a new medical network, using existing public hospitals and clinics, let the VA or its managers run it, and give every uninsured American access to it? Such a solution would be cheaper for taxpayers and would likely provide the uninsured with better-quality health care, frankly, than those of us with private insurance have. Indeed, if it worked, any individual or company could be allowed to buy into the new network. Over time, you'd have an effective public-sector competitor to private-sector health care.

The fourth reaction I have is an intense curiosity about which of the presidential candidates, if any, would suggest such a solution. John Edwards has a detailed plan that basically builds on the current system. Barack Obama is now under pressure to put forth a plan of his own, but while he's a brilliant man, he's new to the whole health care debate and may gravitate toward a more conventional solution.

The one candidate who I suspect really "gets" the VA model is Hillary Clinton. She's cosponsored bills in the Senate on enhanced electronic medical records and dropped strong hints on the campaign trail that the universal health care plan she's working on will be very controversial. She'd be taking a political risk if she were to embrace the VA model: the GOP would surely accuse her of advocating creeping socialized medicine. But there would be political benefits, too, especially for her. Imagine the hawkish senator visiting vets at VA facilities in every swing state, telling the story of the agency's turnaround under the previous Democratic administration, and proclaiming the agency to be a homegrown, red-white-and-blue solution to America's most intractable care problem. While she's at it, she could propose that veterans on Medicare be allowed to use their entitlement for VA care. Such an idea would delight veterans' groups, and save the taxpayers money, too.

Al Gore would have won decisively in 2000, I think, had he run more on the record of the Clinton/Gore administration. I hope Hillary doesn't make the same mistake. With the current employer-based system unraveling and the number of uninsured growing, Americans may be ready to believe that the health of the nation requires real national health care. WM

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PEOPLE POWER

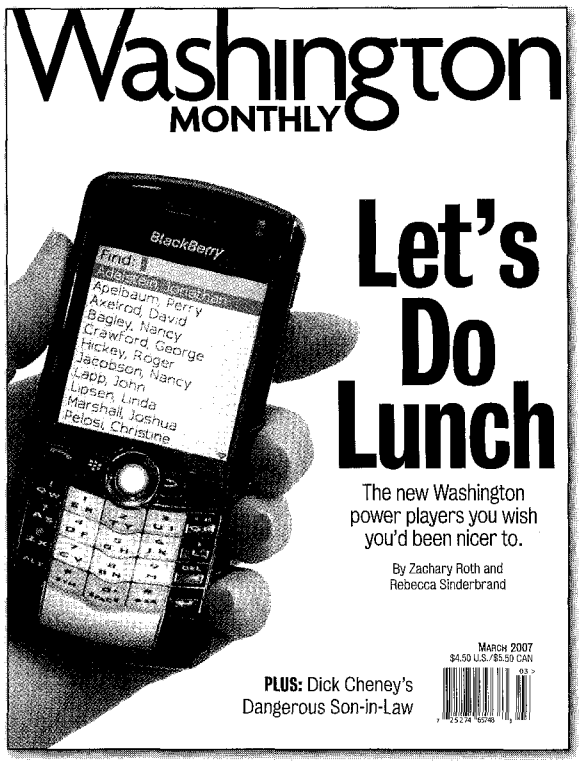
The list of new power players in Washington is certainly impressive ("Let's Do Lunch," by Zachary Roth and Rebecca Sinderbrand, March 2007). But it is disappointing that We the People still don't have a place on that list.

D. H. Fabian
Via e-mail

PLANT LIFE

I live in Kingston, Tennessee, not far from the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant, one of numerous coal-fired electricity-generation plants built and operated by the federal government ("You Too Can Break Into a Chemical Plant," by Art Levine, March 2007). Not only has the TVA been given all but a complete pass by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in all these years—meaning that workers are exposed to unconscionable levels of friable asbestos, beryllium, arsenic, and other life-threatening substances—but upper management erected a large tank farm to hold tens of thousands of gallons of anhydrous ammonia. Despite warnings from lower-level employees familiar with the dangers of anhydrous ammonia, TVA management located these tanks within shooting range of a public road, and immediately adjacent to a TVA access road open to the public.

Think how much mischief could be created with a plain deer-hunting rifle and a handful of bullets on a windy day. Think how much more mischief could be created with an RPG. Our valley is enclosed by the Cumberland Mountains to the west and the Great Smoky Mountains to the east. This enclosure so effectively contains vehicle, industrial, and power-generation emissions that the east Tennessee region has some of the worst air quality in the country. A large release of anhydrous ammonia would not easily disperse. Most area residents are completely unaware this hazard exists.



Elizabeth Singley
Kingston, Tenn.

DIGGING DEEPER

Ken Ward's article ("Shafted," March 2007) contains several erroneous facts and distortions that typify his ongoing biased reporting of the Sago mine incident.

Two points merit specific mention. At the time of the Sago accident, the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration required mine seals to be built to withstand explosive forces at 20 pounds per square inch (psi). In testing performed by governmental agencies after the accident, seals constructed in the same manner as those at Sago withstood explosion forces at or above 20 psi, the regulatory standard. More importantly, however, according to the report of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, the explosive forces at Sago likely exceeded 95 psi.

Second, Mr. Ward writes that rescue operations at Sago were delayed because "not enough rescue teams were available." This is also erroneous. The first mine rescue team was on-site at Sago at 10:40 a.m. on January 2. Other mine rescue teams continued to arrive during the day. What Mr. Ward did not say in his article is that federal and state authorities would not let rescue teams enter the mine until 5:25 p.m. Contrary to Mr. Ward's reporting, rescue efforts were not hampered by a lack or a delay in the arrival of rescue teams.

When it comes to mine safety, we believe that the interests of all are best served by a focus on the facts rather than a distortion of the truth.

Roger L. Nicholson
Senior Vice President,
General Counsel and Secretary
International Coal Group, Inc.

Ken Ward responds:
ICG General Counsel Roger Nicholson is right that federal standards at the time of the Sago disaster required mine seals to withstand explosive forces of 20 pounds per square inch.

But he is wrong to suggest that the seals that failed catastrophically during the Sago explosion were properly built. Investigators from the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training found that the

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Sago seals varied in a number of ways from the mine's approved seal permit. For example, mortar was improperly applied, inadequate header boards were installed, and the seal size did not comply with approved mine plans, according to the state agency's report. Further, sworn testimony given to investigators showed that inexperienced contractors with little if any background in constructing such seals performed the work at the Sago mine.

More importantly, Nicholson does not mention that the Sago disaster has exposed the Mine Safety and Health Administration's incredibly flawed rules—based on a misreading of a 1971 government study—for mine seals. MSHA has beefed up its mine seal requirements to 50 psi, and states are taking similar actions. But thousands of seals based on the 20-psi rule are still in coal mines across the country, putting miners at risk every day until companies do something to reinforce them.

On the issue of mine rescue teams, Nicholson is right that a collection of decisions—by federal and state regulators (but also by ICG)—added to the delays at Sago, keeping rescue teams out of the mine for nearly twelve hours.

But Nicholson does not mention that, at the time of the explosion, ICG had no on-site rescue team trained and prepared to conduct an extensive underground search for the trapped miners. Like most coal companies, ICG took advantage of a federal rule that allowed mine operators to contract out this job to rescue teams up to two hours away from their mines. Some companies, like Pittsburgh-based CONSOL Energy Inc., have opted to maintain extensive rescue teams of their own, adding safety costs in an extremely competitive business.

When Sago blew up, the nearest ICG rescue team was 600 miles away, at the company's Viper mine in Williamsville, Illinois, according to a report by Davitt McAteer, special Sago investigator for West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin.

According to McAteer's report, ICG did not try to contact its contract rescue team in Barbour County, West Virginia, until ninety minutes after the 6:30 a.m. explosion. The first of the Barbour County teams did not arrive on-site until between 10:40 a.m. and 11 a.m.—more than four hours after the blast. A backup team, needed for going underground, did not arrive until about 12:30 p.m.

A new federal law passed after Sago will require some reforms in the mine rescue system. But the shortage of trained teams and the rules allowing most mines to contract out the service were problems recognized by both industry and labor for more than a decade before. The real point of my story was that, as in so many areas, reforms of the mine rescue system were in the works when President Bush took office, only to be scuttled in the name of being friendlier to industry.

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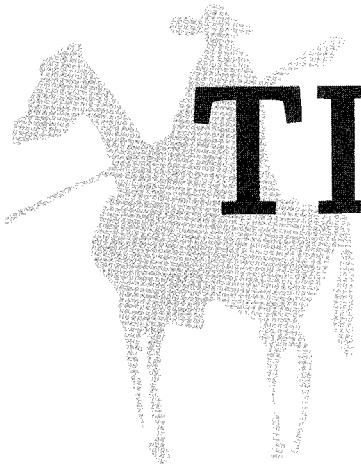

TILTING *at windmills*

By Charles Peters

Viva the VA

"Veterans Defend VA Care" was the headline over a recent article by Kate Long in my hometown paper, the *Charleston Gazette*. "You couldn't be treated any better than they treat you here," a local veteran told Long, describing the treatment of patients at the Charleston Veterans Health Administration Clinic. Another veteran said: "They treat you with respect. You got a problem, they get onto it. Any test you need, you get it." The much larger veterans' hospital in nearby Huntington, West Virginia, where more specialized care is provided, received similar reviews.

Cynics might suggest that the excellent care for West Virginians reflects the state's two senators, Robert C. Byrd, whose record for bringing home the bacon is unexcelled, and John D. Rockefeller IV, who happens to be a former chair of the veterans affairs committee.

But the fact is that veterans' hospitals nationally have been praised not only by this magazine ("The Best Care Anywhere," by Phillip Longman, January/February 2005), but also by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and *BusinessWeek*, which said they provide "the best medical care in the U.S."

This doesn't mean, however, that there aren't problems, either present or looming. From the recent Bob Woodruff special on ABC, we know that VA hospitals weren't prepared for the influx of brain injuries caused by IEDs in Iraq. Furthermore, most World War II veterans are now in their eighties, the time when health problems multiply. Korean veterans will join them in just a jiffy. And not long ago, Congress extended the care responsibility for VA hospitals from only those with service-connected illnesses and disabilities to veterans with any health problems. Additional budget requests and congressional appropriations have not kept up with these increases.

Nor have they kept up with the need to respond to disability pension applications from returning Iraq War veterans. This problem, first identified by the Washington bureau of Knight Ridder (now McClatchy) in 2004, now causes lengthy delays in payments that are desperately needed by families of the seriously disabled. Finally, the present head of the VA, James Nicholson, a Bush appointee, is not impressive. When Bob Woodruff was trying to make the point that a large number of veterans are coming to the VA with previously undetected brain injuries, Nicholson replied, "A lot come in for dental problems."

All this demonstrates that important improvements are needed at the VA, but we should also be sure that we maintain the impressive strengths of its medical care and do nothing to reverse the progress that has been made.

> The nanny is only the tip of the iceberg for the households of the wealthy.

Don't bother with a round-trip ticket

For those Republicans and other conservatives who seem to think that all regulation is bad, I recommend a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* by Daniel Michaels and Alan Cullison that shows that the least-regulated airlines have the worst safety records. The bad records tend to be in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union, where regulation is lax or nonexistent. The worst offenders are Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, and Equatorial Africa, which "don't check on whether the planes they license actually fly." Airline operators are imitating the ship owners who registered their leaky dilapidated vessels in Liberia and Panama to avoid the slightest scrutiny of their seaworthiness.

Night-shift nanny

A recent glimpse into the life of the elite was provided by Mrs. Daniel Snyder, the wife of the owner of the Washington Redskins, who observed, "Almost everyone I know has a nanny." Indeed, you might say that the nanny is only the tip of the iceberg for the households of the wealthy. "Running mansions needs many pairs of hands," reports *Celeb Staff*, a publication called to my attention by the *Wash-*

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ington Post's Peter Carlson. "Among the many folks attached to these hands," he explains, are an estate manager, house manager, personal assistant, chef, chauffeur, housekeeper, houseman, butler, baby nurse, lady's maid, and, of course, the nanny. And there can be several of each of these employees in order to provide the twenty-four-hour service to which the rich have become accustomed. Mrs. Snyder, for example, was recently sued by her night-shift nanny.

In case the Pulitzer panel overlooks your efforts ...

The Jeff Gerth Award for 2007 goes to Mike McIntire and Christopher Drew of the *New York Times* for "Obama, in Brief Investing Foray in '05, Takes Same Path as Donors." Gerth, you may recall, is the *Times* reporter who in 1993 produced the countless paragraphs of dense prose about Whitewater that implied a major scandal involving Bill and Hillary Clinton. Neither his story nor an exhaustive investigation by Kenneth Starr and his legion of gumshoes, plus the right-wing scandal machine financed by Richard Mellon Scaife and other Clinton haters, found proof of involvement by the Clintons in anything crooked connected with Whitewater.

The purported scandalous revelation in the new *Times* article by McIntire and Drew leads with the implication that Obama benefited from stock tips from two of his donors, one of whom is "now at the center of an FBI inquiry." But what is the evidence of Obama's benefit from his investment? "In one transaction, he made $2,000: in the other, he lost $15,000." Is there any showing that he used his public office to benefit either company? Not a shred. The Jeff Gerth Award, as you can see, is richly deserved.

> Hillary's one weakness is a dismaying one for a president. It is a desire to appear perfect that cannot allow her to admit a mistake.

The Christian left

There have been a number of recent articles, including one on Newsweek.com and another in the *L.A. Times*, about a growing openness of evangelicals to a Christianity that emphasizes help to the needy and responsibility for the environment. My son Chris tells me he has seen this tendency among the evangelicals in the church he attends in California. In a tiny but revealing illustration of what's going on, his pastor's son just gave his son the middle name Bono. The secret, Chris said, is to be able to talk frankly and unashamedly about what Christ means to you. If you can do that, you will find a growing number of evangelicals ready to talk about what Christianity requires that we do for our fellow man.

President perfect

To me, one of the greatest mysteries of Whitewater was why the White House resisted making public all the relevant documents in late 1993 after the *Times* article had caused an outcry by the press demanding them. Its failure to do so led to the appointment of a special prosecutor, and to the endless torment for the Clintons that ensued. I subsequently learned that the only person who resisted giving the documents to the press was Hillary. The only thing she had to cover up was the investment tip from Robert L. "Red" Bone that made her $100,000. It was not even crooked. But it would have proved to be embarrassing when revealed, as indeed it did when that finally happened.

This trait of Hillary's is why I'm so uncomfortable with her candidacy for president. Otherwise I find her a completely likeable human being—it's hard to overstate her one-on-one charm—and an impressive public servant. But her one weakness is a dismaying one for a president. It is a desire to appear perfect that cannot permit her to admit a mistake—like taking advantage of the "Red" Bone tip, or voting for the Iraq War.

Hillary, Martin, and Barry

Recently the right-wing columnist Robert Novak spotted more evidence of this problem: Hillary's statement in her recent Selma speech on how impressed she had been hearing Martin Luther King speak in Chicago in 1963. Had she forgotten, Novak asked, that Barry Goldwater, whose presidential campaign she ardently supported a year after being so impressed by Dr. King, was a dedicated opponent of civil rights legislation? In the past, Hillary herself has disclosed her support for Goldwater, but it was not mentioned in Selma. I'm afraid that the Selma speech means a persistence of Hillary's desire to gild her own lily to the point where the truth is denied or at least forgotten. But I still think highly of her and wish her the best—if not as president, then as senator for life.

Don't ask, don't tell, do enlist

One of the few good things to come out of the disastrous war in Iraq has been the growing number of gays permitted to serve their country. The number of discharges for violations of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy has dropped from more than 1,200 in 2001 to less than half that number last year. It just goes to show how nothing inspires tolerance like need.

Bush scandals you may have missed

To the extent that media attention is given to the sins of the Bush administration, it is to the more conspicuous that airtime and newspaper space tends to be devoted, unhappily to the exclusion of other stories of official malfeasance or nonfeasance.

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Among the recent examples that deserve more attention than they have gotten:

- A *Washington Post* story about how Bush political appointees had ordered a Justice Department lawyer to weaken a case against the tobacco industry.
- A *New York Times* story about how IRS agents are pressed to close corporate tax cases prematurely, "allowing billions in tax dollars to go unpaid."
- An Associated Press article relating that FDA food inspections declined by 47 percent between 2003 and 2006.
- Another *Post* story about how the FDA is allowing antibiotics to be used in animals, a practice that can ultimately cause the development of human resistance to those drugs. This has already happened to a drug given to poultry that was effective against anthrax and serious forms of diarrhea, but to which humans have developed immunity by eating poultry products.
- A *Times* story about how the Bush administration has let an industry lobbyist "edit government climate reports to play up uncertainty about a human role in global warming, or play down evidence of such a role."
- Still another *Times* story describing how the IRS is "asking tax lawyers and accountants who create tax shelters and loopholes to take the lead in writing some of its new tax rules." The article quotes Paul Light, a professor of political science at NYU: "It's the fox designing the henhouse."

Good idea, just not from you

The result of these and many similar stories is to demoralize the best career public servants who have tried to do the right thing only to be overruled by jerks.

An unfortunate consequence is that one of the few good innovations proposed by the Bush administration, an effort to make pay raises for civil servants reflect merit more than just hanging on, is opposed by most civil servants and their unions. The bureaucrats' traditional resistance to evaluation has been heightened by their experience of the past six years: they don't trust the Bush gang to decide who is meritorious. And neither do I.

A classy action

The Rosenbaum family has done something wonderful. You may recall how the death of *New York Times* reporter David Rosenbaum was partially attributable to the failure of D.C. emergency medical personnel to determine the real cause of his problem—a blow to the head instead of drunkenness—and their subsequent decision not to take him to the nearest emergency room, but to a hospital that just happened to be conveniently located on their way home. Rosenbaum's family had filed a $20 million suit against the city. But they have offered to forgo the money in return for a commitment by the city to improve emergency services within one year.

Wouldn't it be lovely if more litigants sought solutions to a problem, instead of big bucks? Unfortunately, it is hard to imagine lawyers, practically tasting their third or more of a juicy verdict, agreeing to take cases that might be settled the Rosenbaum way.

Good grade inflation

If you wonder why increasing numbers of mayors are proposing to take over local schools, a recent chart published by *USA Today* provides illumination. The chart shows that test scores improved after the takeover by Chicago's mayor for pupils in grades three through eight compared to the national average, and in New York for the fourth and eighth grades after a similar takeover by its mayor. In New York, the improvement in the mathematic percentage almost doubled in both grades. The overall results were even a bit better in Chicago and occurred in both math and reading.

Takeover by a mayor, however, provides no automatic assurance that schools will improve. The mayor has to be willing to face problems that elected school boards have traditionally avoided, like how to get rid of incompetent teachers and principals and attract talented replacements. Perhaps most difficult of all is the need to shake up the administrative bureaucracies that have often become so preoccupied at protecting their own jobs and benefits that they neglect even their most basic responsibilities, like keeping school buildings in a decent state of repair—a scandal in Washington and many other cities. All the bad guys have entrenched support groups that know how to place minefields in the way of reformers who dare take them on.

> One of the few good things to come out of the disastrous war in Iraq has been the growing number of gays permitted to serve their country.

FEMA'S follies, chapter forty-three

Residents of a FEMA trailer park for Katrina victims were recently shocked by loud knocks on their door from officials who told them they had to pack and be ready to leave in forty-eight hours. Why the sudden rush?

That is the obvious question. But it took the article in the *Washington Post* describing the event nineteen paragraphs to share the answer with readers: FEMA was reacting to a story by the *Daily Star* of Hammond, Louisiana, criticizing FEMA for letting the electric bills for the park go unpaid so often that the power was turned off on three separate occasions.

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"Quite frankly, we received press earlier that week that pointed the finger at FEMA for not paying the bills. We were getting beaten up," the *Post* quoted FEMA's Jim Stark. "At this point we said, 'enough is enough.'"

The residents were transferred to other parks, some a considerable distance away. Most are unhappy at their new locations. Wouldn't it have been better for FEMA to pay the electric bills?

Prescription for profit

Drug companies are so afraid of competition from cheaper generics—drugs that have the same combination of ingredients possessed by the name brands and that come out after the name drug's patent has expired—that they are taking elaborate steps to keep the generics off the market. One, recently reported by NBC's David Faber, is to bribe the generic makers not to sell their version. As one physician points out: "Imagine a Super Bowl game where one team writes a check to the other to keep its star quarterback on the bench."

Freedom of information, minus the information

Has the Freedom of Information Act accomplished its purpose in making federal records available to the public? You don't need to have lived in Washington very long to know the answer to that one: "A review of 149 federal agencies," conducted by the nonprofit National Security Archive and reported by the *Washington Post*'s Elizabeth Williamson, "found that only one in five posts on its website all the records required, and that even fewer—6 percent—tell people how to request what does not appear there."

No credit? No money? No problem!

The insanity of the sub-prime lending spree must have reached its peak when a California mortgage broker persuaded a seventy-year-old woman to take a mortgage requiring payment of $2,200 a month, when her income was less than half of that.

How could this have happened? Even if the broker had acted unwisely, shouldn't the lending institution, New Century Financial Corp., have rejected the loan application? Unfortunately it appears that in their frenzy to make loans, no one at New Century even looked at the application. If they had, they could not have failed to notice that, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, the applicant's income section was blank.

Failing our friends

The *New Yorker*'s George Packer, who has been one of my allies in the effort to get some attention paid to the need to rescue our Iraqi friends as the situation there disintegrates, recently asked a young Iraqi why he had little hope in finding asylum in the United States. The answer:

"For the U.S. to give an asylum for an Iraqi, means they have failed in Iraq."

This is exactly what happened in Vietnam. We waited until the very last minute to admit failure. So we were able to save far too few of our friends.

Perhaps "safer" is relative

Speaking of Iraq, did you catch the NBC Nightly News' Brian Williams's first report from there? As an Army colonel was telling him how much safer Ramadi has become with the recent American troop surge, a frantic-looking soldier yelled that they had to move because it was too dangerous to continue staying in the open.

Get out while you still can

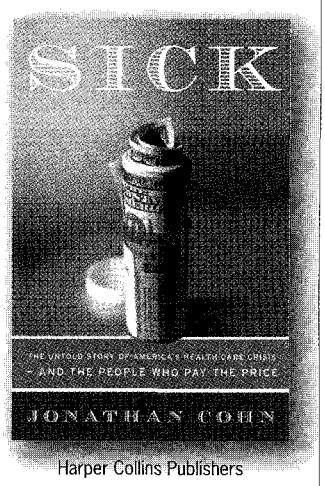
"Do it now! If you stay much longer, you won't be able to give up the money."

That advice, given to a young lawyer considering leaving a large law firm to go into public service, was fondly recalled at the funeral of the adviser, the late Senator Thomas Eagleton, by Senator Claire McCaskill, the grateful beneficiary. It is the same advice I've given over and over again to young lawyers who were tempted to stay at the firms because of the prospect of a bright financial future. But therein lies the snare. As Tom pointed out, the longer they stay, the harder it is to leave. Their rising incomes and generously paid colleagues introduce them to a world of fine cars, fine wine, and gourmet food, of large houses in the better neighborhoods, of expensive private schools and universities, and all the other accessories of the good life that rarely come at bargain prices. Even if the desire for public service continues, they soon come to feel they can't afford it. Or, when they finally feel rich enough, it's too late in life to get the jobs they want. WM

Charles Peters is the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly* and the president of Understanding Government, a nonprofit dedicated to better government through better reporting.

Dēmos Books

New from Demos Senior Fellow
Jonathan Cohn



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OF ALL THE FORMS OF INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE IN HEALTH CARE IS THE MOST SHOCKING AND INHUMANE.

-MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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TEN MILES SQUARE

"... such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) ... [shall] become the Seat of the Government of the United States"
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

The *American Conservative* Crackup

Why I quit Pat Buchanan's magazine

By Alexander Konetzki

Ever since Barack Obama burst onto the political stage in 2004, pundits have taken to calling the junior senator from Illinois a rock star. He inspires, they say, with his youth, intelligence, and soaring oratory. He transcends race.

This flattering picture, which makes even the senator blush, has seldom been challenged by political commentators or the public. And as of mid-March 2007, no one had tried in earnest to subvert the idea that, as president, Obama could help ease America's racial tensions because his mother was white and his father was black.

But that's exactly what Steve Sailer, a columnist for the anti-immigration site VDARE.com, tried to do in a piece he submitted to the *American Conservative* magazine, where, at the time, I was assistant editor. Using quotes from Obama's 1995 autobiography, *Dreams From My Father*, Sailer portrayed the senator not as a unifying figure, but as an angry black nationalist who completely rejected his white racial heritage as a young man and might do the same as president.

"[T]here is the confusing contrast," he wrote, "between the confident, suave master politician we see on television and the tormented narrator of *Dreams*, who is an updated Black Pride version of the old 'tragic mulatto' stereotype found in 'Show Boat' and 'Imitation of Life.'" Sailer surmised that Obama "offers important testimony about the enduring glamour of anti-white anger."

Even before I read the piece I knew I wouldn't like it. *TAC*'s editor, who was pleased with Sailer's work, had told me as much. But I found the piece so offensive when I first read it that I jumped out of my chair and rushed into the managing editor's office to try to kill it on the spot. She and the editor promptly dismissed my objections. The piece is provocative, they said—it's edgy. It's racist, I said—and the magazine will be regarded as such for publishing it.

This editorial conflict over Sailer's essay was an early warning of the emerging conservative response to Obama's intimidating popularity. But it is also a telling moment in the brief, strange history of the *American Conservative*, a magazine that—like the conservative movement at large—is currently having something of an identity crisis.

At this point, I should mention that I'm a progressive. I didn't even know *TAC* existed until a former colleague encouraged me to apply for an assistant editor position at the magazine last November, suggesting that it might be a good first step toward a career in journalism.

This wasn't as ludicrous a suggestion as it might sound; *TAC* is like no other publication in the conservative universe. To provide a right-wing counterweight to the neoconservative voices dominating U.S. foreign policy after 9/11, the magazine was founded in 2002 by leading paleoconservative Pat Buchanan, former *New York Post* editorial page editor Scott McConnell, and the notorious Taki Theodoracopulos, a high-society columnist for London's *Spectator* and heir to a large Greek shipping fortune. (In late March, millionaire California software developer and pro-immigration activist Ron Unz took over as publisher.) From its inaugu-

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ral issue, dated October 7, 2002, it established itself as the only conservative publication to oppose the Iraq War. "What magazine published the most scathing attacks on President Bush and his Iraq invasion?" asked the *Washington Post*'s Peter Carlson in 2004. "If you guessed the 'Nation' or 'Mother Jones' or the 'Progressive,' you may be right ... But the correct answer just might be the 'American Conservative.'"

This opposition to messianism in U.S. foreign policy, I discovered, was just one of many political views espoused by the magazine that most people would never associate with the contemporary right. Over the past few years, *TAC* has decried the growing American wealth gap, the Bush administration's consolidation of power in the executive branch, and even the mistreatment of animals on America's factory farms. Bush, Cheney, the Republican Congress, the Fox News Channel—these are not true conservatives, *TAC*'s editors were saying. We are.

The American Conservative *has decried the growing wealth gap, Bush's consolidation of power in the executive branch, and even the mistreatment of animals on America's factory farms.*

An unlikely trio of editors, of which I was one, put the magazine together every two weeks in a small, drab Rosslyn office. We made an unlikely editorial team. *TAC*'s editor, Scott McConnell, is an heir to the Avon fortune whose stepfather played Gen. Jack D. Ripper in *Dr. Strangelove*. He has veto power over just about every aspect of the editorial process, but seldom wields it, preferring to spend most days browsing newspapers and the blogs of the *American Prospect*'s Matthew Yglesias and the New America Foundation's Steve Clemons. Scott is involved in the production cycle mostly by brainstorming feature pieces and writing short, snarky news items. He is skeptical of government, but also of religion. He advocates reduced immigration, but thinks aggressive environmental regulation to curb global warming might be a good idea. Each one of his conservative views seems to be countered by a liberal one. In fact, he strongly endorsed John Kerry in 2004 and may yet support Barack Obama if he faces a hawkish Republican in 2008.

This complicates Scott's relationship with the magazine's executive editor, Kara Hopkins, who is a more traditional conservative but herself not easily pigeonholed. As a Daughter of the American Revolution whose ancestors sailed to Plymouth Colony aboard the *Mayflower*, Kara is deeply patriotic and, like Scott, skeptical of government—sort of a modern, feminist Edmund Burke. She's a devout Protestant, but she doesn't wear her faith on her sleeve at the office. She considers abortion the sacrifice of innocent life, but feels the same way about the Iraq War, and she seems much more willing to rally with anti-warriors than pro-lifers. She dominates every aspect of the production cycle and is heavily involved in the magazine's business side. *TAC* is essentially her magazine.

During my time at the magazine, Kara and I edited every article *TAC* published, sometimes staying hours after the others left the office to ensure that the prose sounded just right. She was a fine mentor. Our rapport was good because, like Scott, she loathes the Bush administration, didn't care to discuss issues like abortion and gay marriage on which we could never agree, and usually spoke to me with an open mind and a sense of humor. We were never quite friends, but we were very well acquainted. Kara even told me on occasion how much she appreciated having a progressive voice to mix things up in a conservative office.

But there were moments in which she made me feel very insecure about my job. "Perhaps you should consider how good a fit this magazine is for you," she told me after one of our political debates, in which she had become much more staunchly conservative than usual. Once, she mentioned to Scott that she might resign in protest of his growing interest in the left's response to global warming and his waning interest in conservative icon Russell Kirk. If Kara had quit, Scott would have had to close shop. There would be no magazine without her.

But it was the Obama piece that revealed the office's political divisions to be unworkable. The weekend after Kara and Scott dismissed my objections to Sailer's essay, I read *Dreams From My Father*. I realized that, in addition to the racist associations he employs, Sailer frequently quotes Obama out of context and makes assertions about Obama's racial identity that the book flatly contradicts.

For example, Sailer relates an anecdote from the book in which Obama's white grandmother wants a ride to work because she had been threatened by a black panhandler while waiting for the bus the day before. Obama "is outraged—at his grandparents," according to Sailer, who offers the story as further evidence of Obama's anger toward his white family. But in the book the situation is far more nuanced than Sailer lets on. In fact, it's Obama's grandfather who's outraged that his wife was scared because, in her words, "the fella was *black*." Obama describes these words as "a fist in my stomach." But he tells his grandfather that although his grandmother's attitude bothered him, "Toot's fears would ... pass and we should give her a ride in the meantime." Putting his hand on his grandfather's shoulder, he says it's all right, that he understands.

In a further attempt to document Obama's alleged black nationalism, Sailer claims that "The happy ending to *Dreams* is that Obama's hard-drinking half-brother Roy—'Actually, now we call him Abongo, his Luo name, for two years ago he decided to reassert his African heritage'—converts to teetotaling Islam." Roy does

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do these things, but the book's happy ending is the wedding of Barack and Michelle, which brings Obama's black and white relatives together in celebration on Chicago's South Side—a poignant symbol with which to end a story about "race and inheritance." *Dreams* is not at all about Obama's "rejection of his white maternal family in favor of his unknown black paternal family," as Sailer asserts. It's about the loving bond Obama forms with the African paternal family he never knew, and how that not only helps him discover who he is, but also allows him to reconcile the tension between black and white he'd always felt within himself.

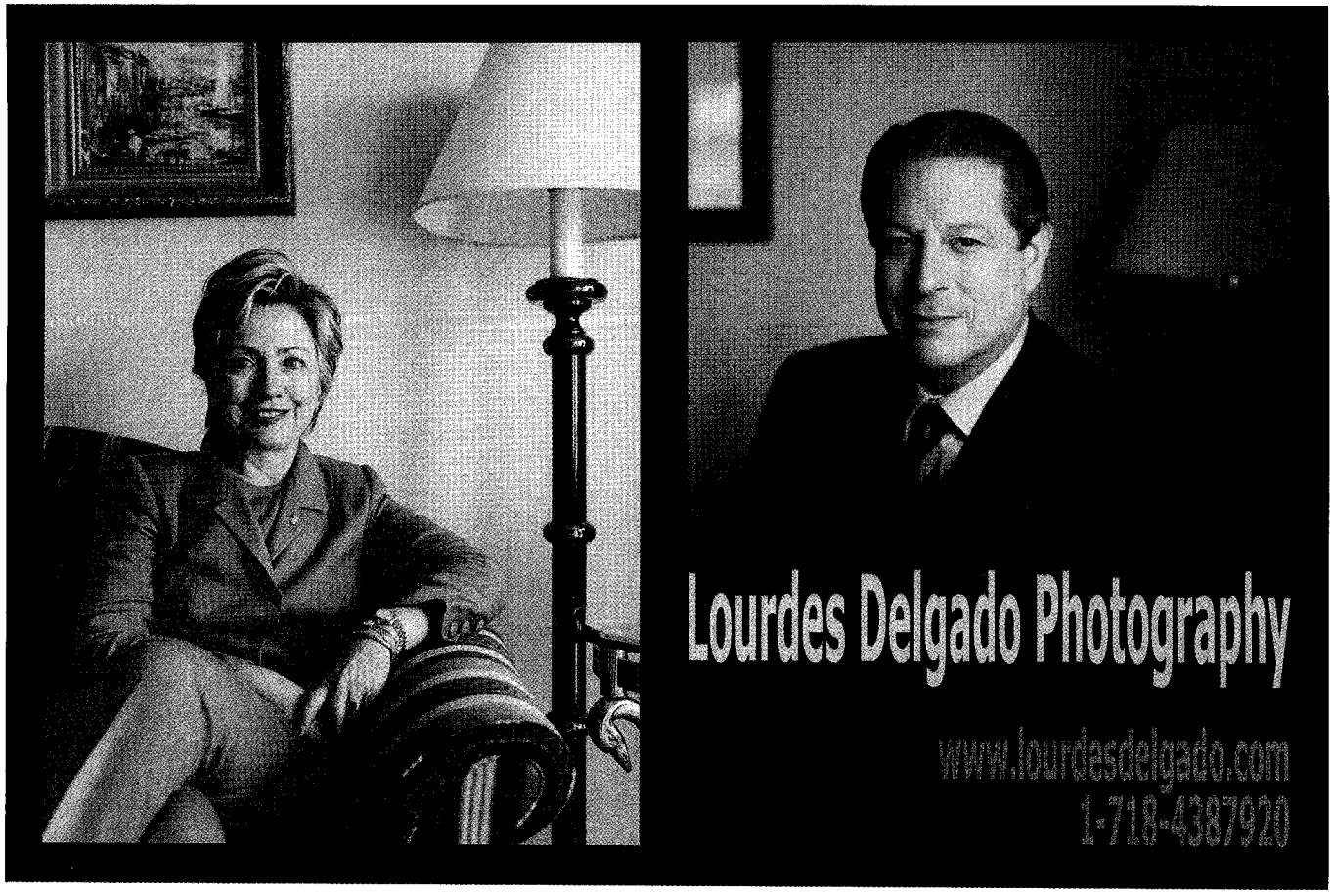
I arrived at the office on Monday prepared to make these points and many more—not as a progressive who admired Obama, but as an assistant editor responsible for fact-checking. I sent an e-mail to Kara requesting a meeting that was never answered. And when I went to her office with Obama's book in hand, asking again whether we could discuss things, she called across the hall to Scott, who said, "Yeah, look, Alexander, this matter has already been decided. The piece is being published as it is." I pointed out that I had read the book, and Sailer's characterization of Obama was factually incorrect. "I have too many other things to worry about," Scott said coldly. "Steve Sailer is a longtime friend of the magazine, and if you and he read a book differently, well, I'll take his reading over yours any day."

With that, Scott left. Kara sat silently looking down at her desk as I stood in the doorway, questions rushing into my head. *What now? You can't stay, right? You've lost too much respect for the editors, and this kind of thing is bound to happen again. Why work where your opinion is so expendable? Then again, what about money? Ah, that! But isn't it time you took a chance?* I cleaned out my desk that evening.

When Sailer's article was published in *TAC*'s March 26 issue, people responded much as I had predicted. Andrew Sullivan called it "stimulating" but "callously insensitive." Matthew Yglesias wrote, "I wonder if Sullivan got all the way to the end of Sailer's essay, which I found 'stimulating' in all the worst ways ... We're seriously supposed to worry that if Obama becomes president ... he'll sell us all down the river to become a corrupt East African big man? Really?"

After four and a half years of steadfastly opposing the Iraq War, the *American Conservative* was well positioned to increase its circulation not only among the increasing numbers of disaffected conservatives, but also among progressives and centrists. By publishing Sailer's hit piece, however, *TAC*'s editors appear to have chosen a different path. "We have to show our readers that we're a conservative magazine," Kara often told me, "not the *Nation Lite*." Indeed, they did. WM

Alexander Konetzki lives in Washington, D.C.



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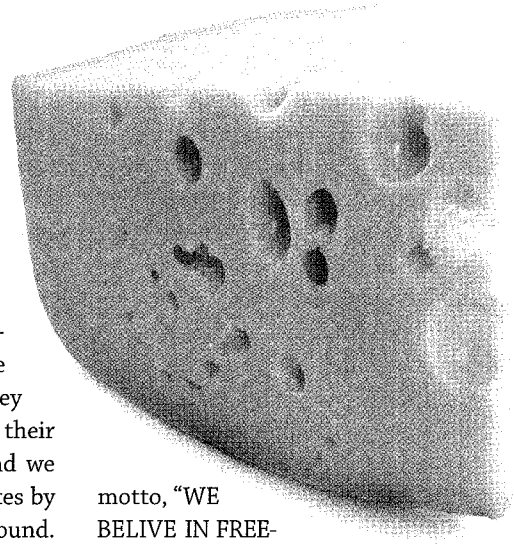
Political *Fromagerie*

The Superhappy Heterosexual Evolving Robots & Neuroscientific Party—and other alternatives for your vote

By Carl Iseli



The early emergence of so many 2008 presidential candidates is a great antidote to the malaise that typically follows midterm elections. But that means extended exposure of these mortals to the combined forces of the press, the blogosphere, and talk radio. Combine this with the most destructive forces of all—the imprecations they will launch against each other, and their own foot-shooting tendencies—and we may be left with no viable candidates by the time the election finally rolls around.

Just look at the early leaders of the Democratic Party. Questions of "Is he black enough?" are countered by "Is she man enough?" Experience is touted as a good thing—unless one has too much of it. Biden has been at it so long he's accused of being entrenched in the system. Maybe Obama should adopt a campaign slogan of "I'm too inexperienced to be part of the problem." Adding to the miasma is the innuendo over Barack's pesky middle name, Hillary's pesky last name, and Joe's pesky mouth. Good grief. What if all of the candidates are fed into the political/media meat grinder and no one emerges? What's a voter to do?

Do not despair. Hope springs in a multitude of alternatives to the two major parties. If the major-party candidates take each other out or self-destruct in the process, you're sure to find *your* alternative within the list at dcpoliticalreport.com. To paraphrase Sinatra, if you can't find it there, you won't find it anywhere. The choices range from the Airenson Socialist Party—whose horribly misspelled motto, "WE BELIVE IN FREEDOM, WOMANS RIGHTS, AND THE FIRST EMENMENT!," may be the reason they as yet have no "canidate"—to Party-X. (Sadly, there are no parties Y or Z, although "Z Party" would be phonetically delectable.) Somewhere among these riches, there just has to be a party for you. Some parties, like the Libertarian National Socialist Green Party, have names that seem oxymoronic—or just plain moronic. Others, like the Solipsist Party (motto: "*E Unus Unum*"), make it clear that joining is a practical impossibility. It would seem logical that the Superhappy Heterosexual Evolving Robots & Neuroscientific Party would want you to be a super-happy heterosexual, but apparently you must be a happy super-heterosexual as well, because its constitution requires that you get "a PhD, MD, and/or law degree." Still, the majority of parties are welcoming enough, if you subscribe to their beliefs and agendas.

The Heart Party is open to anyone who has one. The Light Party invites Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, and Greens, but beware: their "inspired, practical, synergistic, 7-point WIN-WIN program" is anything but "light" reading. If you live in a hurricane-prone area, you might consider joining the Monster Raving Looney Party, whose manifesto includes the issuance of battery-operated personal fans so that, in the event of an impending hurricane, everyone can line up on the beach, activate their fans, and "send [the hurricane] scurrying back from whence it came." While the effectiveness of the MRLP's fans may be debatable, there can be no debate that a fan is a more amiable accoutrement than the Scorched Earth Party's symbol, a bloody lead pipe. Of course, the SEP's contention that "the world will continue to deteriorate until 90 percent of its population is eliminated"—an outcome to be facilitated by the lead pipes—clearly is inconsonant with any hope for a large membership.

On a lighter note, the Pot Party seems more inviting than, say, the National Nihilist Party, although it's hard to tell for sure since the Pot Party's Web page is just a bit, ah, muddled. But for laid-back peace lovers, the sine qua non of parties has got to be the Thermodynamics Law Party, whose "Defense Through Non-Entropy" platform proposes safeguarding against negative foreign forces through Kelvinian Meditation, "scientifically proven" to reduce our national entropy and thus shield us from malevolent invaders. Take that, all you evil emperors.

Former French President Charles de Gaulle once raised the rhetorical question, "How can you expect to govern a country that has 246 kinds of cheese?" Substitute "political parties" for "cheese," and it looks as if whoever winds up in the White House might just find him- or herself mired in a *fromagerie* of disparate ideologies. America rightfully is called the great melting pot, but who would have predicted a pot overflowing with a political fondue of such cheesy—though unquestionably tasty—ingredients? WM

Carl Iseli is the associate publisher of the *Washington Monthly*.

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THE *Monthly* INTERVIEW

Lawrence Wright

Immediately after 9/11, the *New Yorker* writer Lawrence Wright e-mailed his editor, David Remnick, and said, "Put me to work." He wasn't kidding. Wright spent the next five years traveling to remote corners of the world in an ambitious attempt to explain the intellectual and political origins of al-Qaeda. He interviewed more than 600 people, including members of Osama bin Laden's family. The eventual result was a book called *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, which was nominated for a National Book Award. But after years of mixing with jihadists and being eavesdropped on by the FBI, Wright felt he still had more to say. Last year, he converted his personal experiences into *My Trip to Al-Qaeda*, a one-man stage performance. The *Washington Monthly*'s **Peter Laufer** and **Markos Kounalakis** spoke to Wright about the play, which he performed at New York's Culture Project in March.

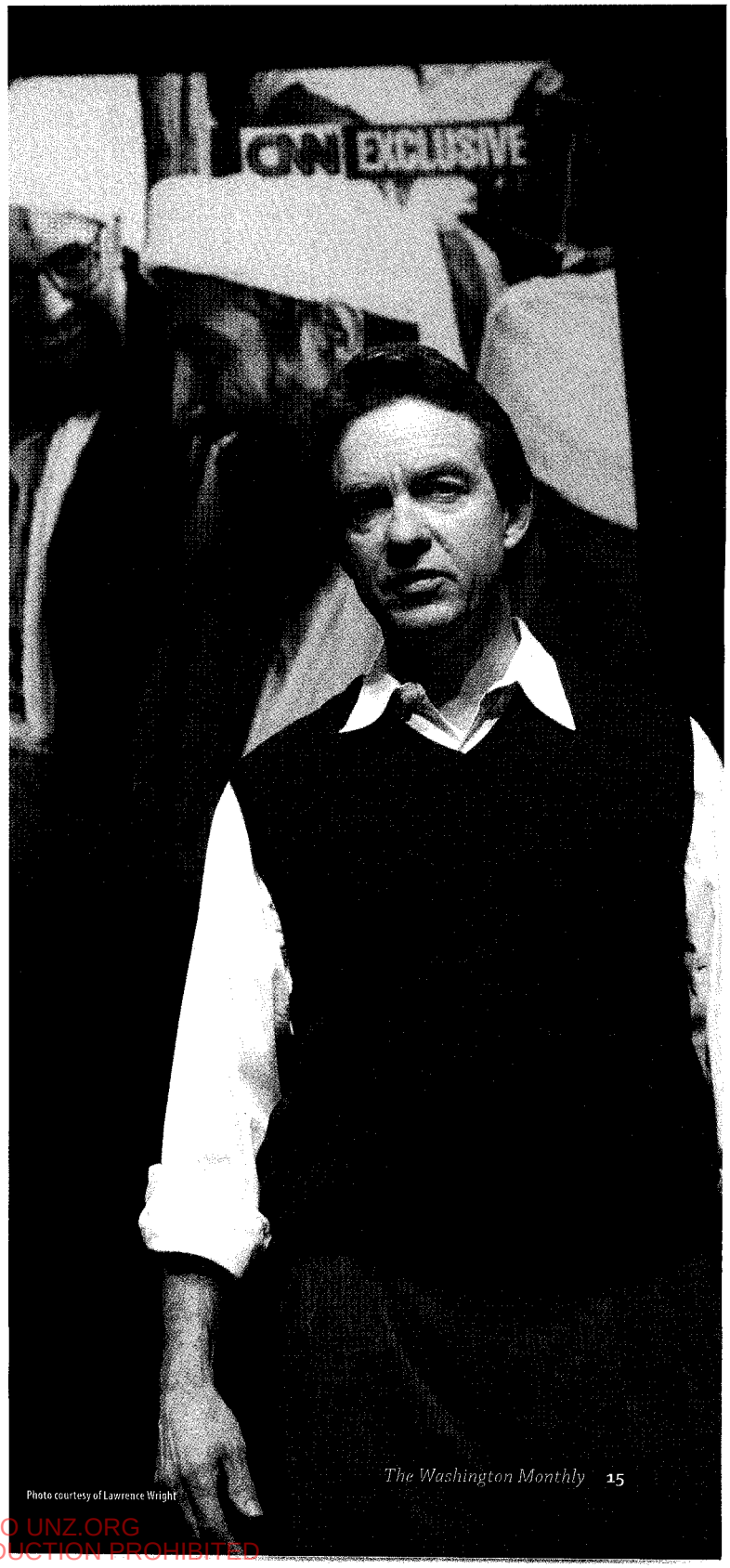

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Wright

WM: Tell us about how you've made this unusual transition from journalist to the stage.

LW: It's a little odd. I'm not a character in my book—it's not a personal account at all. But I had a lot of experiences and emotions that I was still dealing with, and this seemed like an interesting outlet for them.

WM: And those thoughts are based on interviews with some of the less savory characters in our world situation.

LW: People were always asking me, "What's it like to talk to these guys? You've met people in al-Qaeda, you've talked to bin Laden's family." And I hadn't really thought about what it was like. I'd been so buried in the work for five years I hadn't reflected about the feelings I had experienced. I was trying to be an impartial reporter, but there were times that I was very inflamed, and I hadn't really dealt with those things personally.

WM: So, you walk into the home of a family member of bin Laden's and they invite you in, you sit down, you have tea? What's the environment in a room like that?

LW: The members of the bin Laden family that I met were really gracious to me. I had become rather close to his brother-in-law, Jamal Khalifa, who unfortunately was murdered last month in Madagascar. He was a very interesting guy. There are a lot of accusations about his involvement in al-Qaeda. I don't think he was involved. But he was extremely helpful and insightful in guiding me to understanding the mindset behind this kind of radicalism.

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WM: How does this material manifest itself on the stage?

LW: When I started this, the only person I knew who had done a one-man show before was Calvin Trillin, at the *New Yorker*. I asked him for advice, and he said, "Use props!" So I have a number of film clips. I have pieces of interviews with some of my subjects, so you can hear Jamal Khalifa and others talking to me, to help the audience understand the nature of these people.

WM: I imagine that the U.S. government also took an interest in what you were doing. What was that like?

LW: It was infuriating. The thing that's so demoralizing about it is how incompetent the government was in its surveillance of me. Instead of surveilling me, they thought they were surveilling my daughter, who was a college student at the time. They were monitoring these calls that were going from my number to a number in London belonging to a solicitor who represented several of the jihadis that I had been interviewing—and the calls were mainly her telling me, "Please don't talk to my clients."

WM: And they came knocking on your door?

LW: Yeah.

WM: What happened?

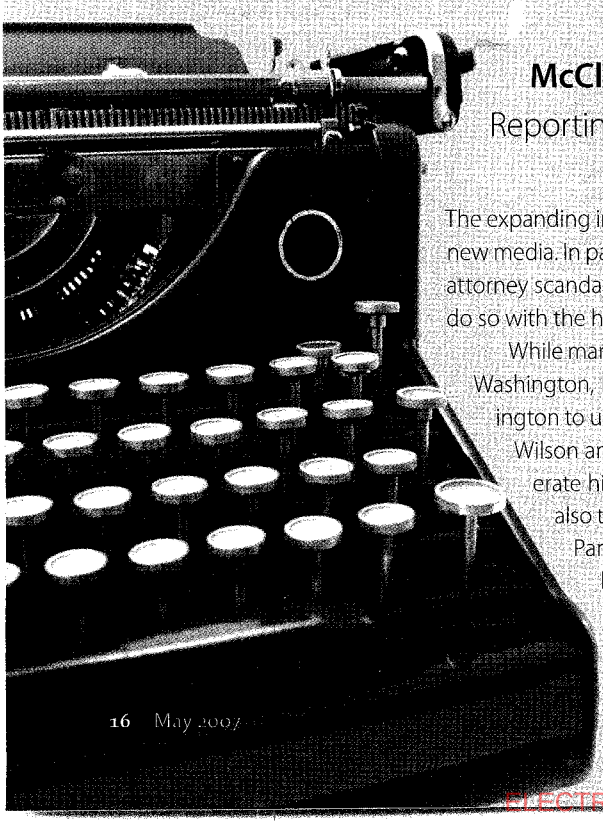
LW: Well, it was an FBI agent and a bureaucrat for the Food and Drug Administration who happened to be a member of the joint terrorism task force in Austin, Texas—where, of course, terror is an everyday concern. They were going to ask me about these calls to London. I thought they were coming for advice. I had spoken to the local FBI, since I had written about al-Qaeda and I had written a movie, *The Siege*. They had wanted some counsel. I am always helpful to people who really want to know something about this movement, so I thought that's what these guys were there for. But no—they were investigating me. So I started asking my own questions, like, "How did you know about these calls?" "What's wrong with talking to a lawyer?" "How did you get [my daughter's] name?"

WM: What kind of responses did you get?

LW: At that point, they shut their briefcases and left. WM

Markos Kounalakis, the president of the *Washington Monthly*, and author **Peter Laufer**, the magazine's broadcast editor, host the weekly program *Washington Monthly on the Radio*, from which this interview was excerpted. The show can be heard on our flagship station, Progressive Talk 1260 AM in Washington, D.C. For a list of other stations or to listen online, visit www.washingtonmonthly.com.

THE *Monthly* JOURNALISM AWARD



McClatchy Newspapers, Washington Bureau

Reporting on the U.S. attorney firings, March 2007

The expanding investigation into the Bush administration's purge of eight U.S. attorneys was initially sparked by new media. In particular, Joshua Micah Marshall's blog, Talking Points Memo, was instrumental in driving the U.S. attorney scandal onto the front pages and to the forefront of the public consciousness. But it was only able to do so with the help of old-fashioned newspaper reporting that supplied crucial details of the evolving scandal.

While many mainstream newspapers initially ignored the affair, the reporting by journalists in McClatchy's Washington, D.C., bureau has been exemplary. McClatchy reporters often turned to sources outside Washington to uncover important leads. For instance, in early March, Marisa Taylor discovered that Rep. Heather Wilson and Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico had pressured then U.S. Attorney David Iglesias to accelerate his indictments of Democratic political figures in the state. And Taylor and Margaret Talev were also the first to discover Karl Rove's fingerprints on the purge. They did so by calling state Republican Party chair Allen Weh, who admitted that he spoke to Rove about firing Iglesias. This disclosure helped widen the scope of the scandal to encompass the Oval Office.

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THE UPSTART

Young people are moving toward the Democratic Party. Has Rep. Tim Ryan found a way to keep them there?

By Zachary Roth

THE SINGLE BIGGEST FAULT LINE in today's Democratic Party is between those who think that expanding international trade is the key to our prosperity, and those who think that it's what's putting that prosperity at risk. And in that debate, last fall's midterms seemed to boost the latter faction: from Virginia to Montana, voters chose Democrats who promised to fight future trade deals and renegotiate old ones. "Free trade has definitely left the building," declared *Slate*'s Jacob Weisberg, writing in the *Financial Times* the day after the election.

Photo courtesy of Tim Ryan

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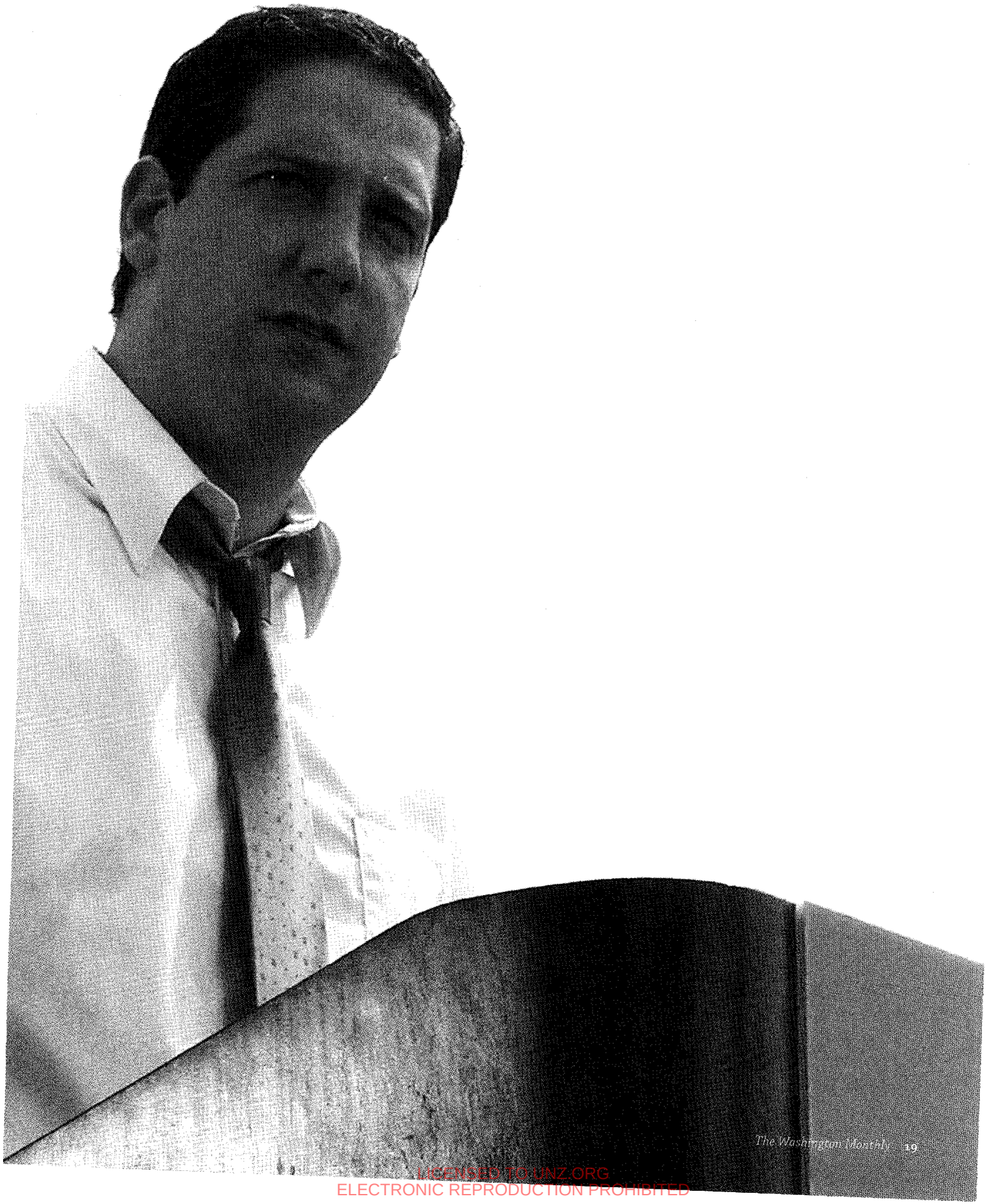

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Few congressional districts in the country were more receptive to that anti–free trade pitch than Ohio's Seventeenth, a gritty, blue-collar region of Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans in the northeastern part of the state, along the Pennsylvania border. For much of the twentieth century, the local area's economy was centered on the steel industry, and it was devastated by the closure of many of the area's largest steel plants in the late 1970s and early '80s, thanks to increased global competition. Auto and auto-parts factories remained the only large-scale employers, but in the wake of the free trade deals of the '90s many of those jobs were lost as well. Today, telemarketing, which offers almost exclusively minimum-wage work, is one of the area's few real growth industries.

Unsurprisingly, an antipathy toward increased global trade pervades the region's political culture. Sherrod Brown—perhaps the most prominent free trade opponent of any Democratic candidate last year—swept to victory in Ohio's U.S. Senate race, in part by winning 73 percent of the vote in Trumbull and Mahoning counties, the heart of the Seventeenth District. Says William Binning, the chair of the political science department at Youngstown State University: "We've been protectionists since McKinley"—a local product himself.

The district is represented by Tim Ryan, a six-foot-three former high school quarterback who was elected in 2002 at the age of twenty-nine and remains one of the youngest members in the House. Not surprisingly, given his constituents' profile, Ryan is known as a hard-nosed economic populist, recently sponsoring a bill that threatens to impose tariffs on Chinese goods in response to China's manipulation of its currency. He's also a definite up-and-comer in the Democratic caucus, and, thanks to some fiery anti-Bush speeches, a favorite of liberal bloggers, who see him as the archetype of the youthful new brand of "fighting Dem."

So it was something of a surprise that, when Ryan gave an expansive speech at the Akron Press Club in January, he said nothing about fighting free trade deals, or unfair global competition, or the evils of corporate outsourcing. Instead, he began by lecturing his audience on the phenomenon of "base transition," which he described as a principle of thermodynamics in which the electrons in an atom begin to move in the same direction. "Our country and our community and our world are in the midst of a base transition," he continued, requiring us "to move away from the old way of thinking."

Inching closer to his theme, Ryan segued into a discussion of the ideas of Alvin Toffler—a name, it's safe to say, that has rarely, if ever, been invoked at the Akron Press Club before. The futurist writer's new book, *Revolutionary Wealth*, Ryan explained, argues that human civilization has passed through two complete stages, or "waves"—the agricultural and the industrial—and that we're now in the third wave, which Toffler calls "knowledge-based." By substituting "ever-more-refined knowledge for the traditional factors of industrial production—land, labor and capital," Toffler and his wife, Heidi, write, we'll soon be able to drastically curtail global poverty, and "unlock countless opportunities and new life trajectories."

For a politician whose district has essentially been devastated over the last thirty years by the shift from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy to be touting the work of one of the foremost champions of that shift was, to say the least, a little odd. But Ryan told the crowd he'd been so impressed with *Revolutionary Wealth* that he'd called Toffler, and last year the two had ended up talking for hours in Ryan's Capitol office. (He later gave Sherrod Brown, among others, a copy of the book.)

Ryan is tall, dark, and broad-shouldered. His speaking style can be fiery when he gets carried away, but in Akron that night, in a suit and tie, he seemed to be making an effort to come off as a sober, thoughtful, and mature adult in front of the local party activists, business and labor leaders, and daily news reporters—many of them twenty or thirty years older than he—in the crowd. Still, as he returned to the theme of a world in transition, a faint edge appeared in his voice. "Our kids and our grandkids are gonna grow up and say, 'When all this stuff was going on, what were you doing? Were you trying to hold on to something that was no longer existing? Were you the one pushing the edge?'" he warned the crowd. "'Were you participating in this? Or were you obstructing this natural evolutionary flow of our species?'" He ended by evoking Bobby Kennedy's promise of "weariness, hardship, and sacrifice."

Ryan was shouting, and waving his arms in front of him like Peyton Manning at the line of scrimmage. "So please forgive the students of this country for not believing what you're saying."

Ryan's listeners appeared to receive his speech as a vague but inspiring call for idealism and public service—"Ryan Presents Concept of Team" was the headline the next day in the *Akron Beacon Journal*—and the applause at the end was warm. But hidden amid the heroic Kennedy allusions and the slightly self-conscious references to atoms, electrons, and waves of civilization was a profound challenge to the audience: the industrial economy isn't coming back. He couldn't,

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of course, come out and say that directly to a roomful of people for whom the industrial economy represented the greatest period of stability and prosperity they'd ever known, which was why Ryan needed Toffler and his sometimes flaky futurism—to act as a kind of sugarcoating for the pill he was asking his audience to swallow. "In our part of the country, we have a very strong cultural tie to steel," Ryan told me later. "And whether we like it or not, the world has changed."

Younger people appear far more willing than their elders to acknowledge, as Ryan does, that America can't wall itself off from the global economy.

The speech, he said, "was a challenge to change your way of thinking."

Ryan's audience may not have known quite what to make of that challenge. But his faith in capitalism to deliver a better way of life for his constituents—which echoes both Bill Clinton and even Newt Gingrich, another Toffler fan—suggests an optimism and vision that's hard to find among the current Democratic leadership. Through his youth, energy, and political skills, Ryan has earned a place as a leader of the younger Democrats in Congress; one leadership aide calls him "a rising star." Now he looks to be groping, hesitantly, toward an economic vision for his region and his country that borrows, and reaches beyond, both wings of the current polarized intraparty trade debate. It's a vision that appears to resonate with Americans of Ryan's generation and younger. And, as with other elements of Ryan's political persona, it could be where the party, and the country, are headed.

Despite its name, few places in America feel less young than Youngstown, Ohio. Most of the abandoned steel plants were demolished in the 1980s and '90s, leaving acres of vacant industrial land, much of it contaminated and unsafe for new development. Downtown, the once-thriving retail outlets have long since fled to the suburbs.

Like many Rust Belt communities, the Youngstown area suffers from an exodus of young people each year. Perhaps as a result, youth has always been somewhere near the center of Ryan's political appeal. The product of an Irish American father who left the family when Tim was a child and an Italian American mother who worked at the Trumbull County Clerk of Courts, Ryan became something of a local celebrity as a star high school quarterback. "Football is God here," says Jimmy Fogarty, who went to high school with Ryan and later made his campaign commercials. That was also where Ryan's leadership qualities first became evident. "On the football field, he could get people to believe in him," Fogarty adds, "but he could also get people to believe in themselves, as a group." Ryan went to Youngstown State on a football scholarship, but soon blew his knee out, and transferred to Bowling Green. Today, he speaks and moves with the comfortable but slightly subdued manner of the former athlete who knows that his better days, at least on the field, are behind him.

While in college, Ryan says, he found himself skipping class to read political news in the paper. The summer before his senior year, he interned in the Washington, D.C., office of his congressman, Jim Traficant, to which he returned after graduation as a paid staffer. Traficant, who dressed—and wore his toupee—in the manner of a particularly flamboyant used-car salesman, styled himself a principled fighter for his downtrodden constituents against the overweening power of the federal government. He was nominally a Democrat, but made little effort to get along with anyone in Washington. Still, he remained popular with the voters of the Seventeenth District, where his fiery style and ostentatious commitment to his struggling community went down well. Ryan, who early on saw Traficant as a mentor, couldn't help but notice.

After law school in New Hampshire, Ryan returned to the Youngstown area in 2000 and ran for a vacant state senate seat. Other than his mother and his grandmother, both of whom had long worked for the local government, he had no real political base. What he did have, however, was a glimmer of celebrity left over from his football days. This helped him build a team of young people who served as his campaign's foot soldiers, and their youthful energy propelled him to victory. (A high school friend of Ryan's, who helped on the campaign and went on to study film, was so inspired by the experience that he used it as the basis for his first movie, *Steel Valley*, which tells the story of a local boy who restores hope to a depressed northeast Ohio community by taking on the entrenched political establishment in an unlikely run for office.)

Once in Columbus, Ryan remembered who had helped get him there. He began to develop an identity as a voice for young people, sponsoring bills designed to make higher education more affordable and organizing local college students to pressure the state legislature on the issue. "We just weren't getting any lobbying from kids, [who are] the people consuming the product," he told me.

But he had his eye on bigger things. In 2002, Traficant was imprisoned for bribery, and Ryan, at twenty-eight, decided to run for his former boss's seat in Congress. In the Democratic primary, he faced six opponents, including an incumbent congressman, Tom Sawyer, who had lost his seat in the previous year's redistricting. About 20 percent of the vot-

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ers in the redrawn Seventeenth had been Sawyer's constituents in his old district. In addition, Sawyer was backed by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and he outspent Ryan six to one.

Still, Ryan had some openings. He hammered away at Sawyer for having voted for NAFTA and GATT, trade agreements that many voters blamed for the region's economic woes. He also aped Traficant's passionate style, which fit the district better than Sawyer's dry, scholarly manner. As he had done during the state senate race, he mobilized hordes of young people, and used them to stage so many street-corner rallies that the local newspaper ran a cartoon lampooning the tactic. Ryan's youth, according to David Skolnick, who covered the race closely for the *Youngstown Vindicator*, "struck a chord with young people, but also with older people, because they were seeing their children and grandchildren leave the area." Many of these voters responded to Ryan's commitment, as a young person himself, to turn the region's fortunes around.

In the end, it wasn't close: Ryan got 41 percent of the votes in a crowded field, beating Sawyer by 13 points. Given the district's solidly Democratic profile, the general election was largely a formality, but Ryan's GOP opponent nonetheless tried to make an issue of his age, attacking him for having used a fake ID and getting into a barroom brawl in college. The charges, though, only seemed to add to Ryan's appeal among voters who had grown used to Traficant's rebellious style. (Talking to a documentary filmmaker covering the race, he laughed them off: "I'm a very bad person, unfit for public office, and yet to be rehabilitated.") Ryan cut himself shaving on election-day morning, but won comfortably.

That sense of youthful exuberance was crucial when Ryan first got to Washington in January 2003. Congressional Democrats were at perhaps their lowest ebb in over half a century. They had just lost seats in both chambers, after a campaign in which many—including Max Cleland, who lost both legs and an arm in Vietnam—had been accused of being soft on Osama bin Laden. In the House, Tom DeLay's GOP majority treated them with sneering disdain, ignoring their input on legislation, and once even using the Capitol police to break up one of their meetings. Some Democrats responded by trying to cut deals to protect their individual priorities, while the more senior members, unused over the course of their long careers to such strong-arming, were shell-shocked and unsure how to respond. When they did protest, the press—distracted by Bush's popularity and the initial success of the war in Iraq—largely ignored their complaints.

The Republicans' high-handed style didn't sit well with Ryan, who says that he and his best friend in Congress, fellow freshman Kendrick Meek of Florida—Ryan calls them "the young Turks"—were "outraged at what was going on."

Eve Qureini

Voters who stick with a party two or three times when they're young, like consumers buying a product, tend to develop an allegiance that stays with them. Hook them early, and they'll be with you for life.

Soon, they had a platform to fight back. Nancy Pelosi, who had recently become the Democratic leader, and was looking to put a fresh face on the party, asked Ryan and Meek to co-chair the 30-Something Working Group, a new party initiative designed to reach out to younger voters. The group's formation presaged a deliberate effort by Pelosi to give younger members more exposure, and to upend the system of strict seniority by which the Democratic caucus had long been governed—a system which Gingrich had already discarded for

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the GOP almost a decade before. "In the past, junior members like us really would have had to wait our turn, and were told to keep quiet and not make any waves," says Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, who joined the group after coming to Congress in 2005. "[Pelosi] encouraged us to make waves."

The younger members were more comfortable with the new communications technology that has profoundly changed politics in the last few years. (Ryan keeps in touch with friends in Ohio by text message.) But just as important, they also seemed to understand better than their elders the ways in which Washington has changed over the last decade or so, making old-style bipartisan conciliation less viable, and requiring instead a more confrontational political style, and the kind of cutthroat tactics pioneered by the GOP. "We really felt like it was important to fight fire with fire," says Wasserman Schultz.

Starting in the late 1980s, Gingrich and a band of GOP backbenchers developed a kind of under-the-radar national following on CSPAN by taking to the House floor late at night and using media-friendly stunts and hard-hitting rhetoric to go after the Democratic Congress. By 2004, Ryan and Meek (joined the following year by Wasserman Schultz) were mimicking that tactic, and slowly gaining a similar notoriety. To depict Congress's fealty to the administration, for instance, they dragged out a massive inflatable rubber stamp. "We were coming to play," says Ryan. Their energy and fearlessness also seemed to galvanize the older members. "We would hear on the floor [from more senior members]: 'Keep going, guys, keep going.'"

Ryan's faith in capitalism to deliver a better way of life for his constituents—which echoes both Bill Clinton and even Newt Gingrich, another Toffler fan—suggests an optimism and vision that's hard to find among the current Democratic leadership.

But it wasn't until October 2004 that Ryan attracted national attention. For a week or so, blogs had been suggesting that if President Bush were reelected, he'd institute a military draft, prompting House Republicans to angrily denounce the rumor. Sensing an opportunity, Ryan took to the House floor. "Why are people believing this big Internet hoax?" he asked. "It's the same people who told us Saddam Hussein had something to do with 9/11, the same people who told us Saddam had weapons of mass destruction ... the same people who told us we'd be greeted as liberators, not occupiers." By this point, Ryan was shouting, and waving his arms in front of him like Peyton Manning at the line of scrimmage. "So please forgive the students of this country for not believing what you're saying."

Coming at a time when even the party's presidential nominee appeared hesitant to forthrightly challenge Bush on the war, Ryan's speech thrilled Democratic partisans around the country, and made him an Internet celebrity—it was posted on YouTube under the headline "Democrat Tim Ryan Kicks Bush's Ass." But it was also a very smart political play, and one that, in its borderline dishonesty, seemed to take another page out of the modern Republican playbook. Democrats couldn't explicitly declare that reelecting Bush would lead to a draft, since there wasn't any real evidence for the claim. But they wanted to encourage such fears, and to keep the issue in the news—particularly in Ohio, the election's key swing state. Ryan's speech was a perfect way to accomplish that.

The speech also helped cement Ryan's burgeoning reputation as a spokesman in Congress for young people. That reputation was enhanced the following spring, when, along with Meek and Wasserman Schultz, Ryan led the Democratic push to turn young people against Bush's Social Security plan. The 30-Somethings called in to morning radio shows, appeared at campus events, and held online town-hall meetings, all designed to convince younger Americans of the dangers of Bush's approach. It's hard to gauge the effect of their efforts, but they sure didn't hurt. Young people were initially the segment of the population most open to privatization: a February 2005 Pew poll found that 66 percent of Americans aged eighteen to twenty-nine supported Bush's proposal. But by late March, after the bulk of the campaign by Ryan and his friends, that number had dropped to 49 percent—the biggest shift away from the Bush plan of any age group.

Thanks in part to the activities of the 30-Somethings, Democratic leaders were beginning to notice Ryan. Later in 2005, after just two full years in Congress, he was asked by Harry Reid, the Democratic Senate leader, to consider challenging Ohio's Republican senator, Mike DeWine, the following fall. After mulling the idea, Ryan declined—he was going through a divorce, and he says he didn't feel ready to leave his district. (Sherrod Brown ended up running, and winning, instead.)

But Ryan's star didn't dim. Facing only a token challenge last fall, he spent much of the campaign season stumping for other Democrats, including some outside Ohio. He also raised more than enough money to spread some around, win-

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ning further favor with the leadership. "Anyone who asked for it pretty much got some," he says. And when Democrats prevailed on November 7, Pelosi seemed to understand that Ryan and the younger members deserved a share of the credit. She chose Ryan, Meek, and Wasserman Schultz to host the Democrats' election-night victory party, with the result that as the speaker-to-be celebrated the new era of Democratic control on national television, Ryan's imposing frame could be seen in the picture directly behind her.

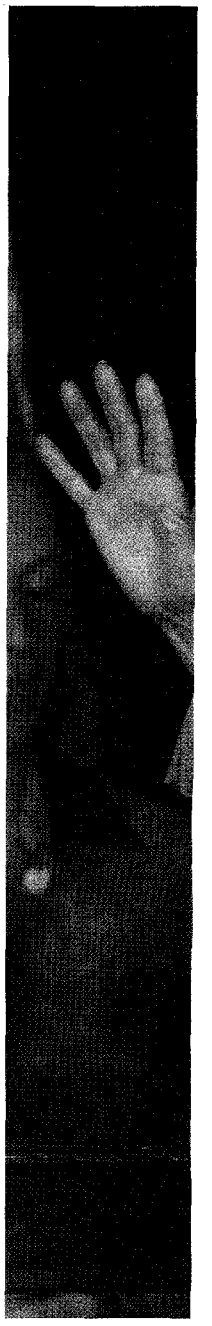
Ryan's growing prominence within the caucus is about more than just the leadership's desire to reward a team player. In last fall's midterms, Democrats increased their share of the vote among eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds by 11 percentage points, while gaining only around 6 points with voters thirty and older, according to exit polls. In other words, young people appear to be trending even more strongly Democratic than the rest of the electorate. This is especially significant, pollsters argue, because voters who stick with a party two or three times when they're young, like consumers buying a product, tend to develop an allegiance that stays with them. Hook them early, and they'll be with you for life. Little wonder, then, that when Democratic strategists think about where the party can make future gains, young people are near the forefront of their thinking. "This next election's pretty important, because we did well among young people in '04 and '06," says Guy Molyneux of Hart Research Associates, a leading Democratic polling firm. "So if we can get them again, the under-thirties will probably be pretty locked in." And Ryan, who'll still be in his thirties in 2012, figures to be near the center of that effort.

And so, as Democrats prepared to take the majority, Ryan continued to prosper. In December, Pelosi appointed him to the Steering Policy Committee, which handles committee assignments for the new Congress—Rep. Michael Capuano of Massachusetts, who was coordinating the transition to the majority and has been a mentor to Ryan, seems to have played a key role in this. From there came the biggest prize of all: a spot on the Appropriations Committee, which will give Ryan a major say in how and where Congress allocates money, and was considered an impressive coup for a third-termer.

But Ryan seems most excited by his appointment to the committee's labor, HHS, and education subcommittee, which he describes, perhaps with some hyperbole, as "a dream come true." There's no doubt that he values the ability the post will give him to steer federal money to his struggling district—indeed, he was among the Democrats who argued recently for looser rules restricting congressional earmarks. "I personally think earmarks are good things as long as they're transparent and can be justified," he told a local Ohio paper in December.

But the new position will also let Ryan advance a longer-term vision that puts education and training at the center of the struggle to turn around his region and other similar ones across the country. Since coming to Congress, Ryan has made college affordability and quality perhaps his most consistent concern, sponsoring bills to give students tax breaks on textbooks, to expand college bookstores, and to help those who enter the military with debt. At the Akron Press Club, he argued not only that our math and science education is currently inadequate for preparing kids for a "truly global economy," but also that music and arts education should be bolstered, not as "some big liberal tree-hugger" idea, but because "it has practical value as to our competitive advantage in the global marketplace."

As the speaker-to-be celebrated the new era of Democratic control on national television, Ryan's imposing frame could be seen in the picture directly behind her.



Of course, almost no one opposes efforts to improve education. But in putting it at the center of his worldview, Ryan is implicitly breaking with the more populist wing of his party. Over the last decade, the labor and domestic manufacturing movements have grown skeptical of the focus on education and training programs, arguing that these initiatives have been used by free traders as an excuse not to reexamine trade policy itself. "There's too much emphasis on ... worker retraining and worker education," says one leading Washington advocate of tightening trade rules. "Let's fix the policy so we're not losing millions of manufacturing jobs to begin with." By contrast, Ryan's interest in education, says Ed Gresser, a trade policy expert at the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, is "an indication that yes, there is real competition, and it's not going away."

At the same time, Ryan's bona fides as a friend of the workingman are unimpeachable. He knows he only got to Congress in the first place by promising to be firmer than his rival in opposing global trade deals, and he recently

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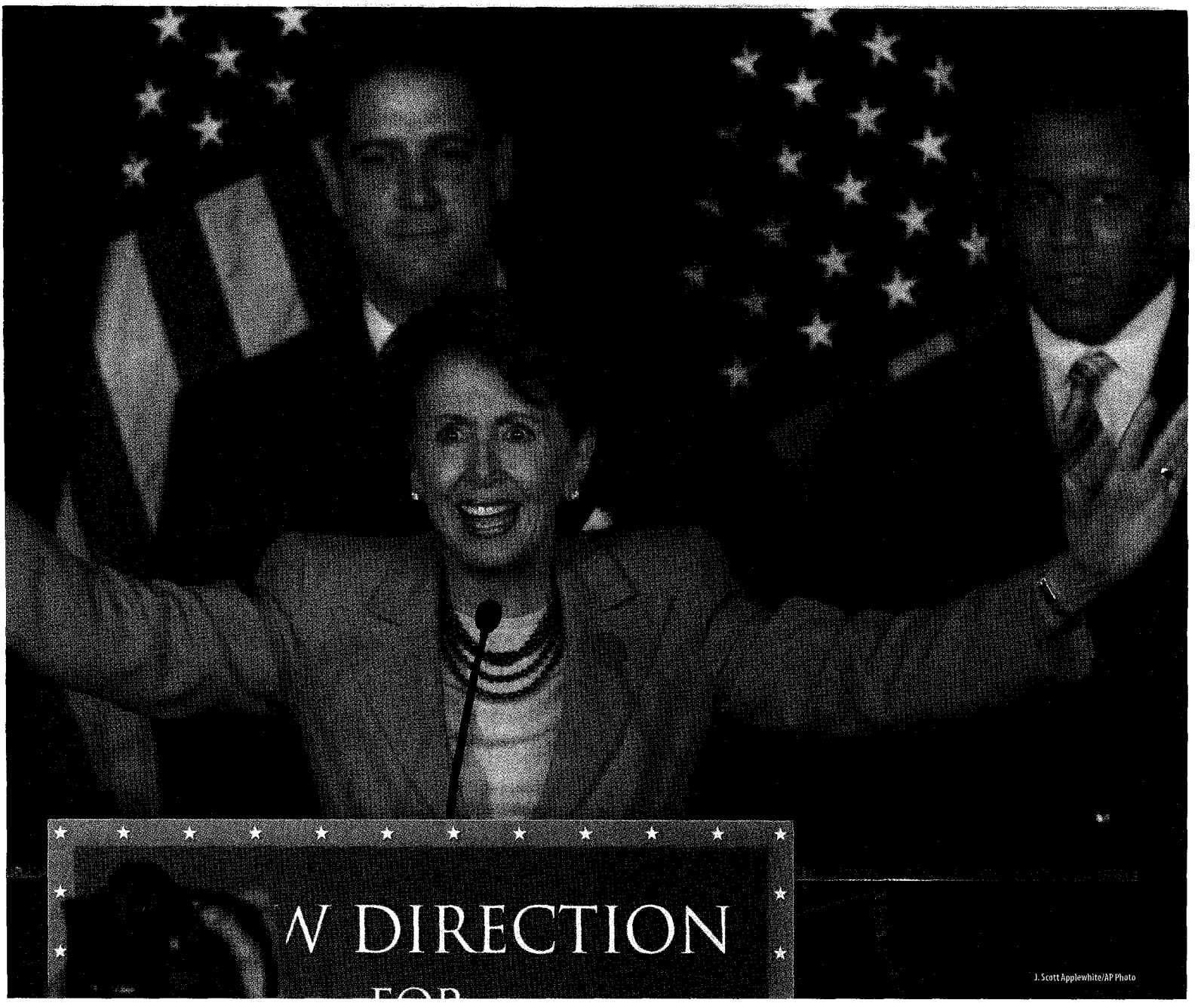

J. Scott Applewhite/AP Photo

teamed with California Republican Duncan Hunter to introduce a bill that would threaten to impose tariffs on Chinese goods in retaliation for China's manipulation of its currency. "He's always stood up for American workers," says Brett Gibson of the AFL-CIO. "He's certainly one of our champions."

That Ryan finds himself claimed as an ally by both sides of the trade divide is more than just clever political positioning. His approach may represent where the party, and the country, is ultimately heading on the issue. Younger people appear far more willing than their elders to acknowledge, as Ryan does, that America can't wall itself off from the global economy. In a recent poll, 41 percent of respondents aged eighteen to thirty-four agreed that free trade deals help the United States. Among respondents fifty and over, that figure was just 18 percent. "Younger people didn't fully live as adults in the world as it used to be," says Lori Kletzer, a trade policy expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a Washington think tank that has generally favored trade liberalization. "So they're more willing to figure out ways to work in a world that has ... job insecurities and vulnerabilities."

There's little doubt that the current trade dialogue within the party could use some nuance. Former Clinton economic adviser Gene Sperling calls it the "divorce court debate"—with each side simply marshalling all the available evidence against the other, and says it "does not reflect the complexity of the world or the complexity of the challenges." Pure free traders, Sperling says, "have to acknowledge that there's been a lot more strain on the middle class from globalization recently." Meanwhile, "trade skeptics have to recognize that China and India aren't going away, and that a real progressive growth strategy has to also focus on a very prospective investment strategy in people"—with education at the center of it. In trying to think seriously about the massive transformation the world is in the midst of, and in searching for a response that goes beyond the slogans of both sides, Ryan appears to be leading the way.

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In March, I visited Ryan in the slightly more spacious quarters that he has been assigned this year—a tangible marker of his transition from backbench upstart to established member of the governing team. But despite the congressman's new status, his operation sometimes still conveys a sense of kids playing dress-up, not quite ready to believe that all this power and responsibility is for real. Ryan has a college-like rapport with his staffers—many have worked with him since the 2002 race—and there's a vague feeling of dorm-room bull session about the atmosphere. Mounted on the wall of the foyer is a framed copy of *Rolling Stone*, with the Dave Matthews Band—every fraternity brother's favorite act—on the cover. ("To my favorite congressman. Peace," Dave himself has scrawled.) As I turned to leave after our interview, Ryan slapped me encouragingly on the lower back, like a football coach sending a new player into the game.

That morning, Ryan's labor, HHS, and education subcommittee had held a hearing on the administration's budget for student financial aid. The regular chair, Dave Obey, a veteran lawmaker from Wisconsin, could not attend, and— although there were many more senior Democrats on the subcommittee—he chose Ryan to fill in as chair in his absence.

As members and their staff filed in, Ryan sat in his usual place at the far end of the row of Democrats, until a committee staffer came over and whispered that it was time to get things started. Sheepishly, he took over the chair's seat, as the few Republicans in attendance giggled. "I call this meeting to order because I can," he announced, grinning and tentatively tapping the chair's hammer on the desk in front of him as if it might explode. "Congratulations on your rapid ascent to chairman," offered New York Republican Jim Walsh, to guffaws all around.

When it was Ryan's turn to question the witness, a Department of Education undersecretary, he had written out his opening statement word for word, like an unsure student. Still, he took the opportunity first to rip the Bush administration for underfunding student-aid programs, and then to lay out his vision for the role of education in society. "Our nation's output and our citizen's standard of living are without equal, and that didn't happen by accident," he told the room. "It happened because the leaders of yesterday made the right kinds of investments in education, transportation, infrastructure, science, and technology." Now he was warming to his theme: "Will we make college truly affordable for every student who has the ability and the will to work hard, study, and continue to make America the world's economic leader, or will we choose another course?"

Soon after, Ryan adjourned the hearing, joking to his colleagues with a grin, "I hope to be back here in about thirty years." Later, though, he told me he doubted it would take that long. WM

Zachary Roth *is an editor of the Washington Monthly.*

Advanced Planning

Now that Democrats are at last in the majority, and Tim Ryan is entering his fifth year in Congress, he's beginning to stretch his arms and think creatively about some of his party's most controversial issues. Though he's pro-life, Ryan recently teamed with Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, a pro-choice champion (and close Pelosi confidant) to sponsor a bill that would aim to reduce abortions by improving access to family planning and providing aid to women who proceed with unwanted pregnancies. "We're not being judgmental. We're not talking about *Roe v. Wade*. We're not criminalizing anything," Ryan told a group of bloggers about the bill last summer. "This is just about: How do we take a holistic approach to reduce the number? Because we are better at reducing the number of abortions than Republicans are, because we talk about prevention and we talk about the social support that we need."

Democrats have appeared to be moving toward this type of consensus approach to the issue since 2005, when Hillary Clinton gave a high-profile speech to family-planning providers declaring the need to reduce abortions without restricting choice. On the first day of the new Congress, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid—like Ryan, an abortion opponent—introduced a similar measure. In political terms, the new direction represents a slick double play: it helps counteract the party's reputation for being unconcerned about the high rate of abortions, while calling the bluff of many pro-life conservatives, who publicly lament the high abortion rate but, because of a traditional view of sexual morality, insist on abstinence as the only acceptable way to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

As the House's new standard-bearer on this approach—and a pro-life Catholic to boot—Ryan appears ideally placed to help lead the party's effort to recast itself on abortion, and potentially to lay to rest a reliable GOP weapon in the culture wars. It's also something that he seems to feel strongly about on the merits: "If we do it and we do it right," he told me, "that will go down in our party's history as one of the key things that we got done. Civil rights, Medicare, Social Security, cut the abortion rate."—*Z.R.*

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Knowledge is Power
BAD
Always be Prepared
NEVER

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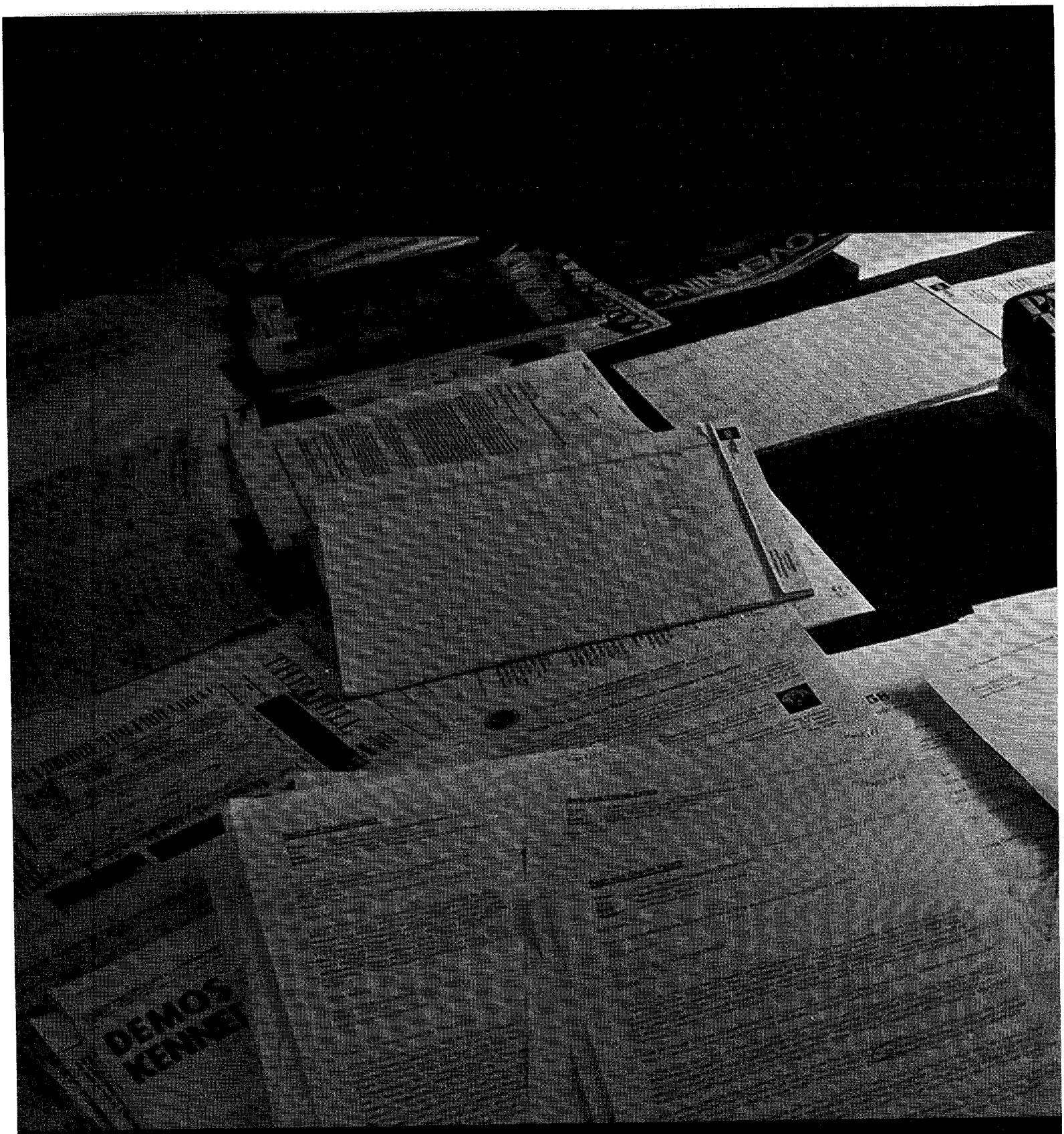

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A Neoliberal Education

David Brooks thinks neoliberalism is dead.

Charles Peters begs to differ.

Eve Qureini

IN HIS MARCH 11 COLUMN, *David Brooks of the* New York Times *declared that neoliberalism is dead. The left, Brooks argued, was returning to "its old, pre-neoliberal self." Good riddance, was more or less the swift response from a host of liberal bloggers, such as the* American Prospect*'s Ezra Klein. "Substantively, [neoliberalism] didn't move the country very far forward at all," he wrote on that magazine's blog, TAPPED, associating neoliberalism with Rubinomics and the "glittering vision" of NAFTA's backers. Neoliberalism's lasting legacy, he*

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went on to say, "will be the elevation of counterintuitive argumentation and sardonic detachment in the press corps."

This characterization somewhat dismayed the Washington Monthly*'s editor in chief, Paul Glastris, because neoliberalism is a subject close to the magazine's historical heart. The term (or at least its American usage) was coined by the magazine's founder, Charles Peters, in the late 1970s, and many of the ideology's founding disciples were the young editors who worked at the magazine in the 1970s and 1980s, including Taylor Branch, Nicholas Lemann, James Fallows, Mickey Kaus, and Jonathan Alter. Later, Katherine Boo and James Bennet came along, as did Jon Meacham and Jason DeParle. In an effort to persuade the liberal blogosphere that neoliberalism is not, in fact, synonymous with pro-market, K Street–friendly centrism, we republished Peters's 1983 article, "A Neoliberal's Manifesto," online, and asked Ezra Klein to read it. Recently, Klein sat down with Peters in his Washington home to discuss neoliberalism's past, present, and future.*

Ezra Klein: This essay, "A Neoliberal's Manifesto," is a much clearer explanation of neoliberalism than I've seen anywhere else. You write, "We no longer automatically favor unions and big government, or oppose the military and big business. Indeed, in our search for solutions that work we've come to distrust all automatic responses, liberal or conservative."

That struck me as one of the real contributions of neoliberalism. But what has happened, at least to some younger folks like me, is that at times this appears to have become not an honest critique, but a positioning device. The idea that it's not about the quality of the argument, but the display: you *show* honesty by attacking Democrats, you *show* independence by attacking liberals. At times I think that has been a damaging impulse on our side.

Charles Peters: [Laughing] I understand the way you're feeling. In 2004 Mickey Kaus was savaging Kerry. And I kept telling Mickey, For chrissake man, you're going to reelect a guy who's clearly a monster and an idiot. Mickey was right that a lot was wrong with Kerry. But Kerry was still a lot better than Bush. And of course Mickey ultimately took that position. But by that time anybody who had read the column was thoroughly convinced that Kerry was a jerk.

We don't believe in being different for the sake of being different. We believe in being different when it helps us get to a truth that liberals don't seem to grasp. One thing we said was that we're concerned that just as conservatives become automatically pro-religion, Democrats become automatically embarrassed by religion. I always thought, all these liberals who worship Martin Luther King, what the hell did they think he was? He was a Christian who appealed to Christian values and who sold his movement on Christian values. FDR sold the New Deal on the basis of Christian values. That's a perfect example of what we as neoliberals tried to do. The point about criticizing the teacher's union is not just to bitch about them, but to get decent education for kids who are being deprived of it by incompetent teachers who are protected by the unions.

EK: What do you think about the possibility for an asymmetry in honesty, where you end up having the conservatives and the neoliberals ganging up on mutual enemies?

CP: There's always the danger of that. I think you will see that most of the original neoliberals, since 1994, have been much tougher on the conservatives, and much more effort has been directed to making the points about why government is needed.

EK: One of the themes lacing the essay was how the neoliberal critique really took the idea that we need more risk in the economy, that people need to be more free to be entrepreneurs.

CP: In the late seventies, there was this stagnation, and you desperately needed a rebirth of entrepreneurship. The neoliberals can't take complete credit for this rebirth, because it was happening right as we were calling for it. It began to happen with people like Bill Gates and the Apple guy in their garages. Things were ready to explode. But as in so many revolutions that are desirable, it went too far. All these people got to be concerned not with just having the exciting new business, but with making more and more dough, to the point that it made no sense.

EK: There was also a lot of praise for politicians like Gary Hart and Paul Tsongas, who were making the investor class a focus of the Democratic Party. That's important for reinvigorating the economy, but somewhat neither here nor there when you're talking about the risks and the gains for the poor, the less educated, or even the lower middle class. This is a common critique of neoliberalism, that the focus was almost myopically on the middle class, whereas traditional liberalism had focused more on the marginalized.

CP: Well, back then it was so bad, you needed to encourage entrepreneurship. The situation has changed now. There began to be a need to address the terrible excesses of capitalism that occurred, and we began to hammer away at those.

EK: So, do you agree with David Brooks when he talks about the vanishing neoliberal?

CP: I think in many, many areas, the neoliberals, in effect, won. But in some cases we won too much. For instance, the rebirth of capitalism produced such extremes that we then had to turn around and say no, that is wrong. But where we clearly haven't won is with the government bureaucracy, the teacher's unions. We have hardly made a dent, and they still have terribly strong power. You have to be able to fire incompetent teachers and incompetent civil servants.

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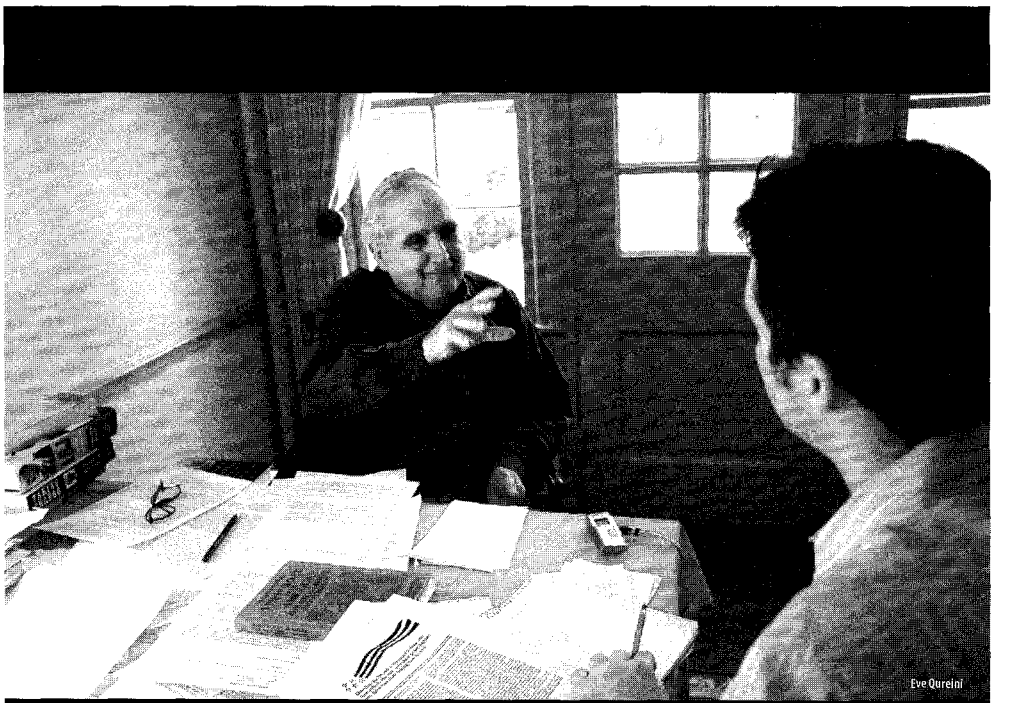
Those are two great analogous problems in education and public service that no one seems to want to face. And the Democrats never issued the kind of call that Jack Kennedy did, that public service is a proud and noble calling. Jesus, when I was working in the Kennedy administration, I got calls from all my smart friends all over the United States. They would suddenly want to talk to their good friend Charlie Peters about whether "there is something there for me in Washington." It was wonderful.

EK: The roots of the *Monthly* and its version of neoliberalism were in the desire to make government work better. You have supported a national health care system for a very long time. That was not something the original neoliberals were afraid of. How did we get to this moment, where everyone thinks neoliberals want to chart a centrist, somewhat conservative course away from liberalism?


Eve Qureini

"One thing I learned is don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself in the interest of what you believe."

CP: Well, I have to say that I think that a lot of people haven't been reading Charlie Peters and the *Washington Monthly*, where these ideas were laid out, because then they would know what we believe. I read what people have said recently, and it's absurd. You know, like, we are anti-tax. Just last month, I pointed out that the lowest unemployment has come when we've had the highest taxes. I have defended the estate tax over and over again. And one thing that we helped bring about, that truly represents the neoliberal spirit, is the earned income tax credit.

EK: Do you still worry about entitlement programs?

CP: Oh, in essence, yes. I am a redistributionist. I hate wasting public money on the rich, I hate the agricultural subsidies that go to the rich. It drives me crazy. And I hate wasting Social Security money on the rich, so that it is not something that benefits the middle class. I've said many times that, if anything, we want to give more to the poor and take away money from the rich.

EK: Again, the prototypical neoliberal is sounding more liberal than any liberal I know.

There has been a strange generalizing of neoliberalism from the concept which you created, and your magazine nurtured, and it generalized into a sort of antiliberalism on the left. That has caused a lot of confusion.

CP: Mickey Kaus made the great point—of forty-five of my protégés, how many of them supported the war? Actually, I can think of only two, for sure. We were not Marty Peretz, Peter Beinart, and Michael Kelly. Neoliberalism came out of the journalistic doctrine of the *Monthly*. This was rooted in part in my experience in the Peace Corps, to find out what we were doing right and wrong in government, and to make sure that what we were doing wrong got corrected. We wanted to be sure of two things: we went out and saw what was happening and talked to people out on the front lines, and then we took our conclusions and our analysis and subjected them to a tough cross-examination. As you begin to think that way, you begin to face the things that were wrong in your own political doctrine. So there was a link between the journalistic approach and the intellectual approach.

EK: Also, I think that the true *Washington Monthly* brand of neoliberalism got overtaken by Michael Kinsley and Andrew Sullivan and folks like that at the *New Republic*, and that became the association. The DLC too, to some degree, but that was incorrect.

CP: I'm very fond of Mike. He's genuinely brilliant, but I think there has always been a tension between Mike and me, in that I sense he is embarrassed by passion. Mike's detachment has notably decreased since his marriage and the onset of Parkinson's, both of which had a pronounced humanizing effect, but his more sardonic imitators have become a major problem in journalism—very bright people who seem too concerned with being bright. Mike is definitely not one of those guys.

But, as you realize in talking to me, there is passion, this is a movement. The Don Quixote thing. Because one thing I learned is don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself in the interest of what you believe. WM

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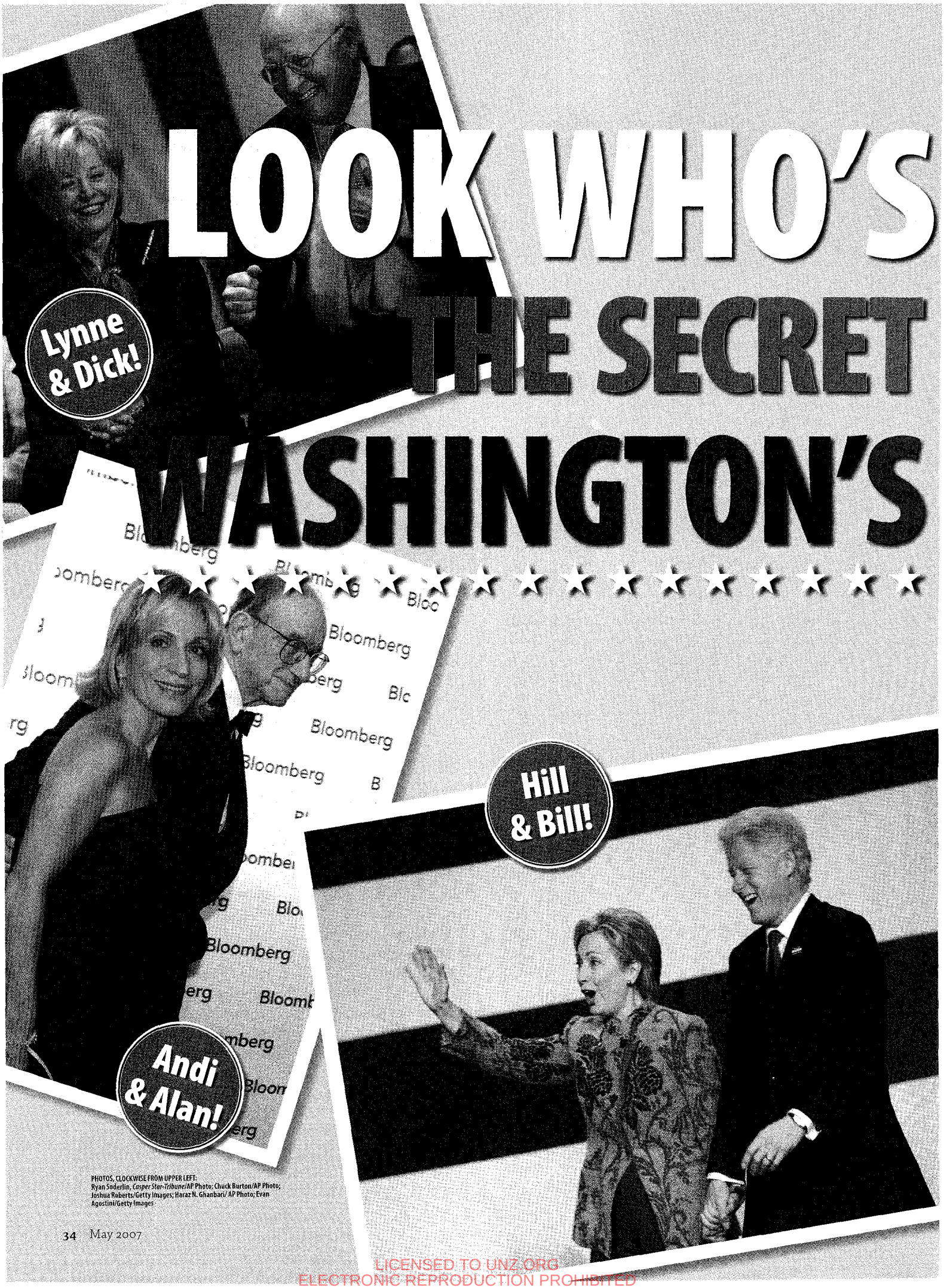
LOOK WHO'S THE SECRET WASHINGTON'S



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: Ryan Soderlin, *Casper Star-Tribune*/AP Photo; Chuck Burton/AP Photo; Joshua Roberts/Getty Images; Haraz N. Ghanbari/ AP Photo; Evan Agostini/Getty Images

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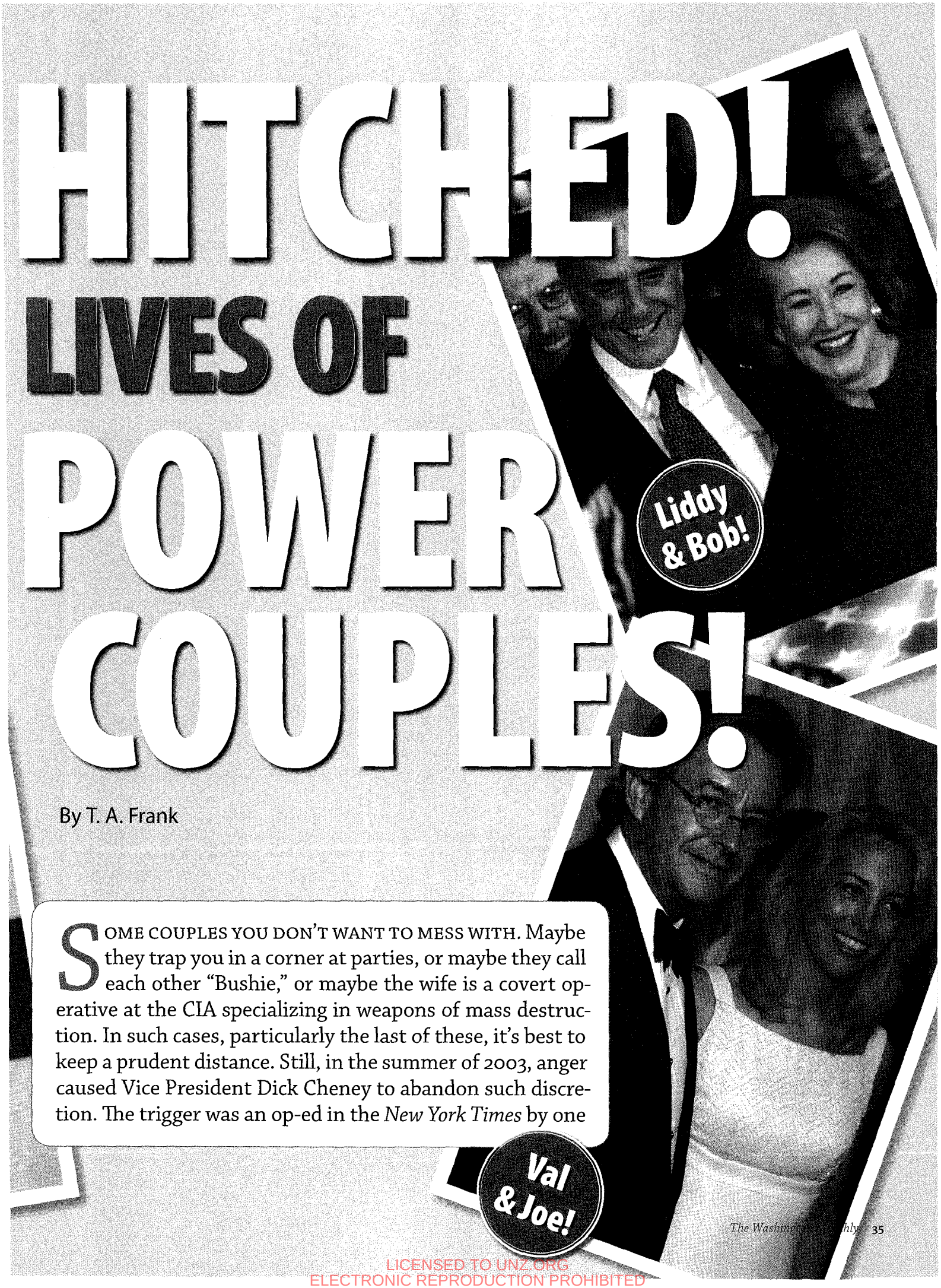
HITCHED! LIVES OF POWER COUPLES!

By T. A. Frank



SOME COUPLES YOU DON'T WANT TO MESS WITH. Maybe they trap you in a corner at parties, or maybe they call each other "Bushie," or maybe the wife is a covert operative at the CIA specializing in weapons of mass destruction. In such cases, particularly the last of these, it's best to keep a prudent distance. Still, in the summer of 2003, anger caused Vice President Dick Cheney to abandon such discretion. The trigger was an op-ed in the *New York Times* by one

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Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who described taking a CIA-sponsored trip to Niger in 2002 and debunking claims of Iraqi uranium purchases, only to see the White House ignore the findings and mislead the public about evidence for WMD in Iraq

Cheney did not enjoy the article. Poring over each sentence, the vice president underlined passages and scribbled vexed notes in the margins. "Do we ordinarily send people out pro bono to work for us?" he wrote. "Or did his wife send him on a junket?" The "wife" referred to one Valerie Plame, who, Cheney had learned, worked as a WMD specialist at Langley. After discussion with his chief of staff, I. Lewis ("Scooter") Libby, Cheney decided that Libby should go forth and whisper to colleagues and journalists about Valerie possibly having pulled strings for Joe at the CIA to get him a trip to Niger. The old-fashioned nepotism-conflict-of-interest angle looked like a promising sell.

But a curious thing happened on the way from Leakville to the newsroom: not much. Very few journalists bit. A host of plausible reasons for this come to mind. One is that Niger, while unmatched in nomadic camps and Neolithic rock engravings, doesn't exactly suggest a junketeer's paradise. Another is that most reporters, while happy to receive inside information, still have the decency not to out one of our spies. A third is that accusations of spousal favoritism coming from the husband of Lynne Cheney are, to put it gently, a bit rich. (Former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke notes that, on the evening of 9/11, Dick invited Lynne to join staff in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center, a restricted bunker below the East Wing of the White House, and that she felt comfortable enough to drown out the teleconference of the Counterterrorism Security Group by turning up the volume on CNN.)

Mark Wilson/Getty Images

Unlucky Couple
Scooter Libby arrives at court with his wife, Harriet Grant.

The main reason, though, was simply this: Washington has no real quarrel with power couples. Nor does it have a quarrel with power couples whose professional lives occasionally overlap. This also applies to the journalists that the White House wanted to entice with the Plame leak. There was *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, who'd once shared a home with the late Les Aspin, at various times a congressman, defense secretary, and Miller source. There was *Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus, spouse of Ann Terry Pincus, a onetime director of the Office of Research at the United States Information Agency, a position to which she was appointed by Bill Clinton. There was John Dickerson of *Time*, married to Anne Dickerson, a onetime news producer who now specializes in media coaching for advocacy groups. And NBC's David Gregory: he's the husband of Beth Wilkinson, general counsel for Fannie Mae; they met when she was prosecuting Timothy McVeigh and Gregory was reporting on the case. And there was *Time*'s Matthew Cooper, married to Mandy Grunwald, onetime media specialist for Bill Clinton and current ad guru for Hillary Clinton. As for Bob Woodward, who'd learned about Plame several weeks earlier, he is married to *New Yorker* writer Elsa Walsh. If Dick and Scooter hoped to indict Joe and Valerie for the proximity of their professional lives, they might have picked a more promising jury. Only old Robert Novak took the bait, and Novak, like Mikey in the bygone commercial for Life cereal, eats anything.

What Cheney and company seem to have missed is that Washington has changed. Career overlap occurs here because career parity between husbands and wives has become normal rather than exceptional. Not only do accomplished men and women now seek each other out; it's rare that they don't. The power couple, in short, is integral to Washington life.

And two cheers for that. Thousands of Washingtonian power couples—defined here as couples in which both husband and wife attain positions of consequence—now pursue influential, independent careers. Some, like NBC's Andrea Mitchell and former Federal Reserve chief Alan Greenspan, get lots of attention. Some, like Joe Wilson and Valerie Plame (at least until they become famous), get none. Many, like Scooter Libby and Harriet Grant, onetime Democratic staff lawyer for the Senate Judiciary Committee, get something in between. All are evidence of a city that has tossed aside its old sexist clubbiness and replaced it with a new nonsexist clubbiness.

But couples are also a funny thing. When they put their mind to misbehaving, they can, by the nature of their close-

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ness, be especially naughty. Those Macbeths, for instance, did *seem* so nice at first. Or, to take a more Washingtonian example, when former Congressman Tom DeLay started to get in legal and ethical trouble, one of the problems was that his wife, Christine, had received $115,000 from the Alexander Strategy Group, a lobbying firm, for doing close to nothing. (Christine and DeLay's daughter, Dani, also received a total of $350,304 in political consulting fees and expenses as consultants for her husband's Americans for a Republican Majority Political Action Committee.) Then there was DeLay aide Tony Rudy, whose wife, Lisa Rudy, founder of Liberty Consulting, took in $86,000 thanks to lobbyist Jack Abramoff. (Abramoff now admits payments were made to get Tony Rudy to influence DeLay on some key votes.) In each of these cases, the spousal monkey business evidently continued for years unnoticed.

The problem is that the same Washington indulgence toward dual-career married couples that rightly protected Valerie and Joe (or almost did, until Bob Novak came along) is also what wrongly protected the DeLays and Rudys (or did until the prosecutors came along). Such indulgence isn't surprising. People here are married, so most have a stake in the deal. Moreover, Washington is a one-industry town that already tolerates some outrageous conflicts of interest. Lobbyists become legislative aides, and legislative aides become lobbyists; agency officials become lawyers with clients who have business at the agency, and lawyers with clients who have business at the agency become agency officials; generals retire and go to work for defense contractors, then become talking heads on television arguing for greater spending on defense. In such company, power couples, even very cozy ones, look innocent indeed. Finally, power couples are routine everywhere. Every city has its celebrated pairs: New York has Tina and Harry, Seattle has Bill and Melinda, and Los Angeles has Brangelina. Why should those in Washington merit extra scrutiny?

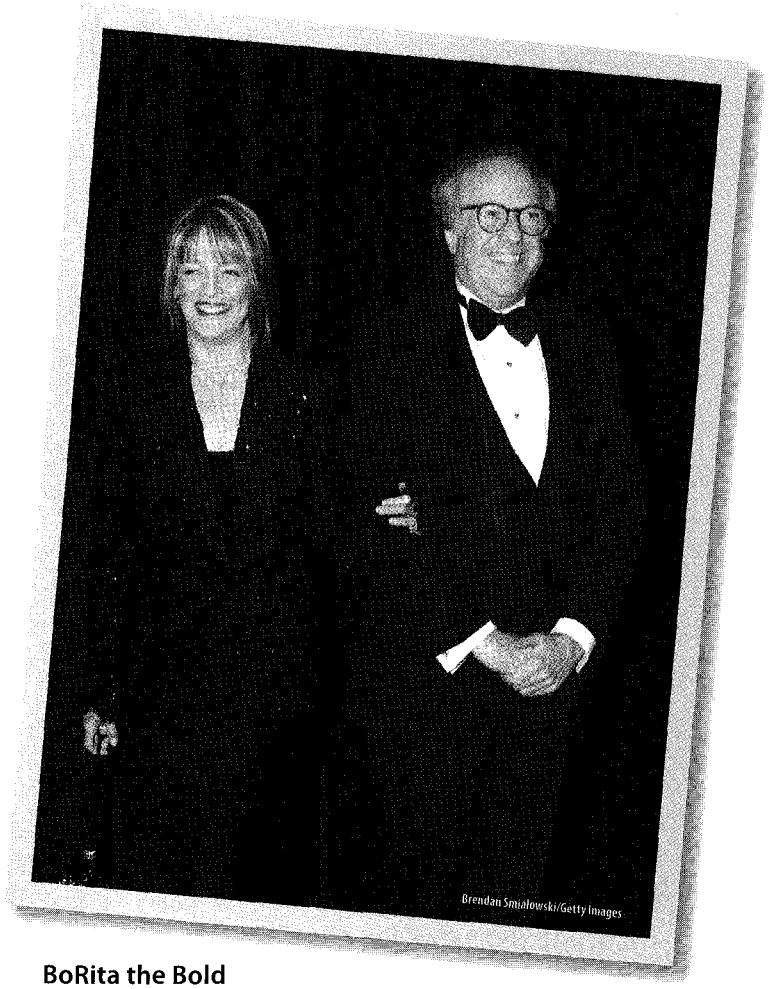
The answer is simple: because what happens in Washington doesn't stay in Washington. In Los Angeles, if Ben Affleck cuts a hidden deal with former squeeze J-Lo, the most damaging consequence is another *Gigli*. In Washington, if Congressman John Doolittle allows Julie Doolittle to be the sole staffer of "Sierra Dominion Financial Solutions" and to collect 15 percent of all money donated to Doolittle's PAC, the most damaging consequence is, well, the reelection of Congressman John Doolittle.

This makes it much more important to keep an eye on such things. John-and-Julie-style duos are, thankfully, rare, and most power couples in this town are made up of charming, ethical people. Still, thousands of Washingtonian husbands and wives hold positions that could, if misused, allow them to benefit one another at the expense of the rest of us. That's why, more than any other city, Washington has marriages that, when you first learn about them, make you go *hmmm*. (Or at least we do. Take a look at the list starting on page 44 and see if you agree.) Washington is happy to know about them, of course, but it's not sure *you* need to know.

Or do you?

Consider Bob and Rita, a model Washingtonian power couple. Bob is a friendly, sixtyish attorney at Williams & Connolly, one of the country's premier law firms. He is also known, according to his own Web page bio (where he appears as Robert B. Barnett), as one of the "premier authors' representatives in the world." His clients have included Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Bob Woodward, Lynne Cheney, Alan Greenspan, Katharine Graham, Barack Obama, and Queen Noor. Rita, his wife, kept her maiden name, Braver, when they married in 1972. She now works as a national correspondent for CBS News' *Sunday Morning*.

Bob and Rita are often on the road, about 100 and 150 days per year, respectively. Their time together is mostly during weekends, when they like to brunch at Furin's in George-



BoRita the Bold
Super-lawyer Bob Barnett and CBS's Rita Braver attend a Kennedy Center Bash.

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town and maybe take in a movie. When they do happen to be home during the week, their days are long. They arise in the morning and hit the exercise room in their apartment, and then it's off to work until evening. Professionally, they lead independent lives.

That doesn't mean they don't run into each other, though. Bob likes Democrats, and he has played a role on the debate-preparation team of nearly every Democratic presidential campaign since 1976 (the exception was in 1996). The problem, of course, is that his wife has often had to report on people being represented by Bob, or Bob has had to represent clients who were being reported on by Rita. Faced with this sort of problem regularly, the two have come up with what they consider a workable system. "We have a rule called 'Who gets there first?'" Bob explains. "If I'm involved in something, then she doesn't cover it. And if she's covering something, I can't get involved in it." (When Rita was assigned to cover the White House, though, Bob, who had been Bill Clinton's private counsel, agreed to relinquish his role. "I won Husband of the Year Award from our condominium," Bob recalls.)

More than any other city, Washington has marriages that, when you first learn about them, make you go **hmmm.**

Who knows how well such an arrangement always works? In any case, it has at least allowed two skilled professionals to have proper careers. What's more important to the rest of us is that they're open about their connections. Bob, for instance, consented to sit for an interview on the subject. As for Rita, her CBS Web site biography volunteers that she is married to Robert Barnett.

But openness and rulemaking of the sort practiced by Bob and Rita are largely a matter of individual choice in Washington. If Bob and Rita chose to be less stringent about separating their beats or to be more secretive about their private lives, they probably wouldn't hear too many complaints. When, for instance, Campbell Brown, anchor for the weekend edition of NBC's *Today Show*, tied the knot with Dan Senor, longtime GOP operative and former spokesman for Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority, no one minded that Brown had first met Senor when interviewing him in Iraq and soon after taken a shine to him. People can't help whom they fall for. Nor did anyone insist that Brown amend her NBC Web site bio to include information about her new spouse. That was Brown's business.

Or take the case of American Enterprise Institute resident scholar Fred Kagan, who is widely credited with authorship of the "Surge" in Iraq. Kimberly Kagan, wife of Fred, is writing assessments for the *Weekly Standard* of how the Surge is working. Nowhere in the *Standard*, however, has there been any reference to her marriage. Blogger Andrew Sullivan wrote a pointed entry about this—"[T]hey picked the wife of the main author and one of the plan's original architects. And they never disclosed these relevant facts"—and so did a few others, but it never rose above a minor grumble. The *Weekly Standard* stayed the course.

Double-Barrelled DeLay
Tom and Christine DeLay take heart in the Second Amendment at the NRA's annual meeting.

That power couple mores can vary so widely in Washington is partly because every organization has its own ethical standards. The federal government forbids any spouse in the executive branch from hiring a spouse, but that's as restrictive as it gets. For the past decade or two, for instance, lawmakers have regularly been getting hitched to lobbyists. This hasn't prevented either spouse from continuing with work as normal. If husbands or wives of elected officials have chosen to cease lobbying their spouses or the colleagues of their spouses, it's been for the sake of appearances rather than the sake of law. The spouses of Senators Ted Stevens, Liddy Dole, Byron Dorgan, Dick Durbin, and Kent Conrad are all registered lobbyists.

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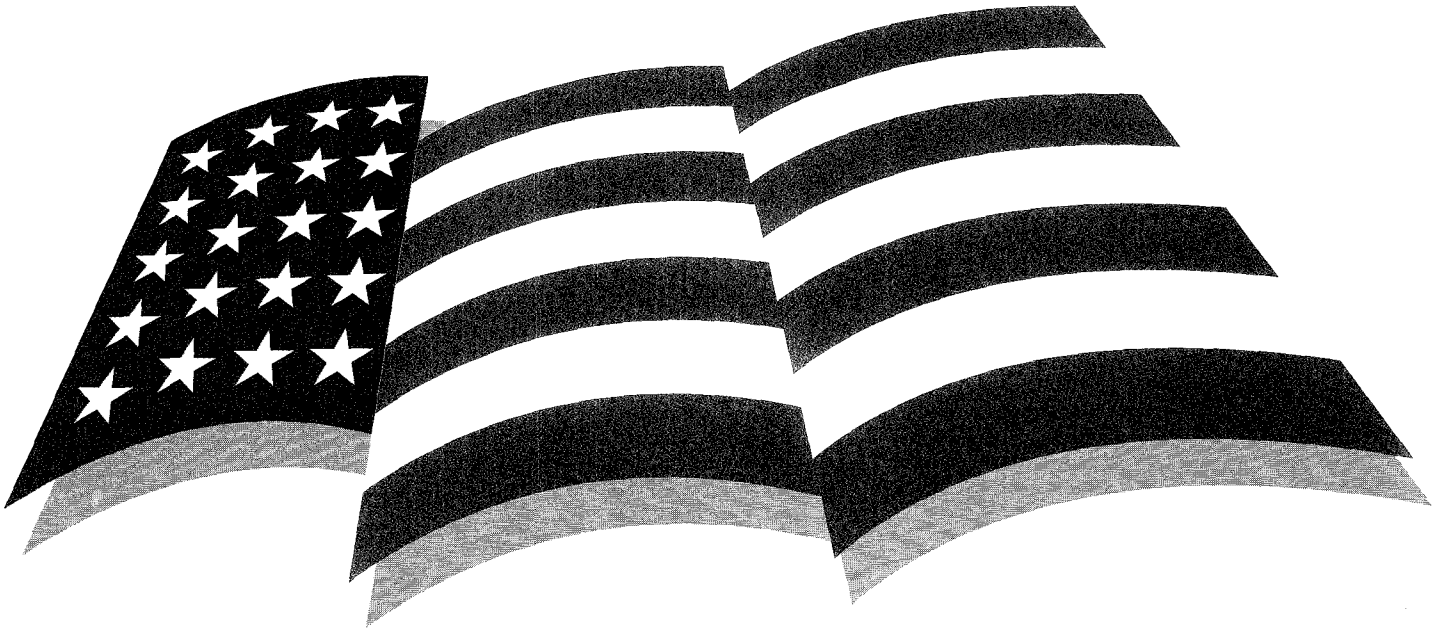

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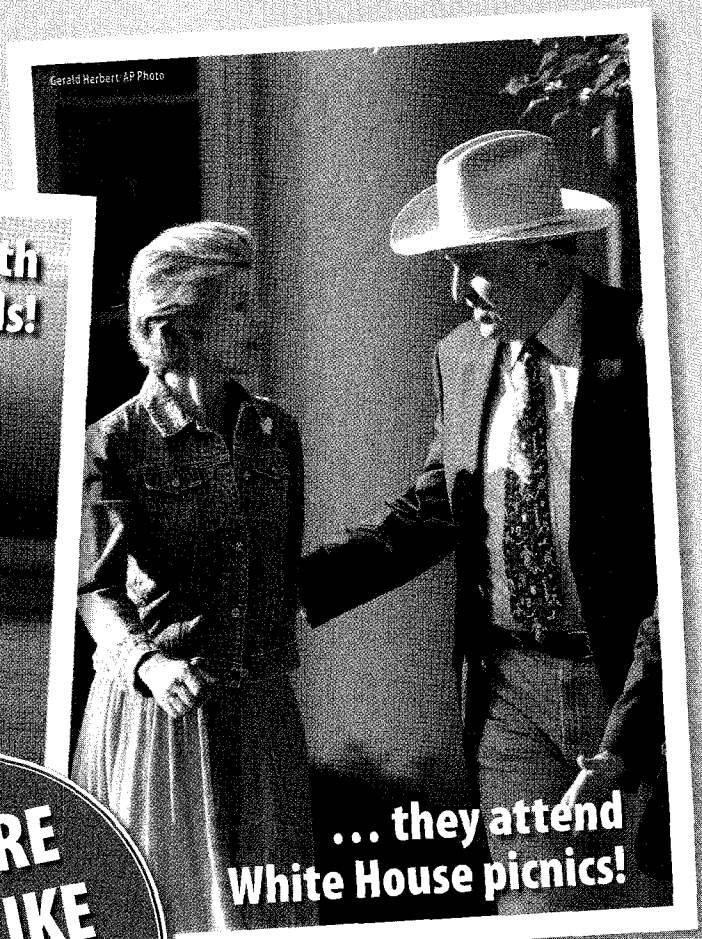
WASHINGTON POWER COUPLES . . .

The Cheneys walk off Air Force Two for a rally in Pennylvania.



The Negropontes attend the Congressional Picnic at the White House.

THEY'RE JUST LIKE US!

The DeLays sit in court, where Tom faces charges of conspiracy and money laundering.

The Doles hit a supermarket in Bal Harbor, Florida.

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Recently, though, the Senate tightened rules on such matters. No longer may a Senate spouse lobby the Senate. Well, no spouse except those who became lobbyists at least one year before their marriages (or one year before their senatorial spouses were elected). This new rule winds up inconveniencing exactly one spouse: Lucy Calautti, lobbyist for Major League Baseball and wife of North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad. Sorry, Lucy. It's all in the name of ethics, you know. The rest of you go about your business.

In the House, meanwhile, spouses remain free to ply their trade as before. And such trade has allowed romance to blossom for members such as Congressman Roy Blunt of Missouri, who was linked romantically to Abigail Perlman, lobbyist for Philip Morris, when he tried to insert legislation favorable to big tobacco into a homeland security bill. In 2003, Roy divorced his wife and married Abigail. Although Abigail stopped lobbying the House once Roy became acting House majority leader, she remains a lobbyist. If there are House standards on spousal lobbying, let's just say they're not overly confining.

Newsrooms, too, have varying rules, and the standards continue to evolve as the phenomenon of dual-career pairs takes hold. When NPR correspondent Michelle Norris of *All Things Considered* informed her superiors that her husband, Broderick Johnson, would be acting as a senior adviser to the campaign of John Kerry in 2004, NPR decided to pull Norris off all political coverage for the campaign season. On the other hand, in 2005, when *Los Angeles Times* political reporter Ron Brownstein married Eileen McMenamin, chief spokeswoman for John McCain, the *Times*, it seems, couldn't quite figure out what to do. A few weeks ago, it finally switched Brownstein out of the newsroom and over to the opinion section.

The *New York Times* stands out for having a thick guidebook to journalistic ethics, and one issue it addresses is that of spousal careers. "In a day when most families balance two careers," it notes, "the legitimate activities of companions, spouses and other relatives can sometimes create journalistic conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts." For example, a "spouse or companion who runs for public office" would create such a conflict. The *Times* remedy is to require that staffers "not write about people to whom they are related by blood or marriage." And there are many instructions about notifying the standards editor. In practice, though, it mainly boils down to a salty rule laid out by the late A. M. Rosenthal, one that somehow didn't make it into the guidebook: "If you're fucking the elephants, you can't cover the circus." (The phrasing of the quote varies, but not the imagery.)

But in Washington, a city of circus watchers, that can be a considerable restriction.

Let's at least be grateful for how far we've come. Twenty-five years ago, Washingtonian wives with careers comparable to those of their husbands were viewed with something between suspicion and bemusement. "It was a major story when I chose to continue working," recalls Debbie Dingell, who was a lobbyist for General Motors when she married Democratic Congressman John Dingell in 1981. (She quit lobbying but remained at General Motors.) "The social activities for spouses were totally designed for people who didn't work."

Even the most important women in town quickly learned to set the bar low. In her 1982 book *Ear on Washington*, Washington gossip columnist Diana McLellan describes one memorable Washington welcome: "Justice Sandra O'Connor found herself celebrating her appointment at a luncheon—not with twenty-four senators, but with twenty-four senators' wives."

The early '80s were also a time when the phrase "power couple" first entered common parlance in Washington. *Imagine that*, was the subtext. *She's important, too*. And, as it happened, "she," most of the time, meant Liddy Dole. A Nexis search for mentions of "power couple" prior to 1990 turns up 133 articles, of which no fewer than eighty are about Liddy and her marriage to Senator Bob Dole. To get a sense of how novel this power couple seemed back in the day, note this passage from a 1983 article in *Newsweek*, written when Liddy was secretary of transportation: "Perhaps the truest measure of the impact of Washington's consensus 'power couple' is the surfeit of Dole jokes making the rounds at Georgetown dinner parties. There's the one about how their marriage violates federal antimerger laws." Clearly, Washington wasn't yet comfortable with married women having careers of their own. And when Bob decided to run for president in the 1988 election, Liddy, to the disappointment of many working women, resigned her post in order to support him properly.

> ***The problem with Washington marriages is rarely the possible conflicts of interest. It's the concealment of them.***

If there was a turning point in the history of power couples, it was when Bill and Hillary Clinton moved into the White House. Bill's presidency brought many new pairs to town, most of which were of the dual-career variety. (The most famous of these was James Carville, a Clinton campaign staffer, who married Mary Matalin, a George H. W. Bush campaign staffer.) Even more important than duos in

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the Clinton entourage, though, was the First Couple itself. Here, for the first time, was a presidential pair in which each party had recently enjoyed a real career. Washington, ever the gracious host, had a fit. Conservatives spent the next eight years or so combing through Hillary's history at the Rose law firm in search of damning conflicts of interest.

Still, power couples were becoming plentiful enough that they were beginning to provoke some serious reflection on the subject. In the late '80s and early '90s, the media began to look seriously at all the ethical pitfalls of working in overlapping careers. A 1994 article in the *Washington Post* Outlook section even identified "power-couple syndrome" and suggested that Bill and Hillary take the lead in coming up with "clearer guidelines, more creative solutions" for the new ethical terrain. It was all very high-minded.

In the end, though, no one ever did do much about coming up with clearer guidelines (although one could argue that "creative solutions" have been plentiful). Instead, Washington allowed the new couples to settle in, and everyone got comfortable. Today, the power couple is barely more newsworthy than a power single. According to Diana McLellan, the fascination with power couples is entirely gone. "That era is dead," she notes. "There are no more surprises."

Labor of Love
Mitch McConnell bucks up Elaine Chao at her confirmation hearing.

Newspapers do periodically chronicle who in elected office is married to whom. We're reminded that Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is married to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. Or that Congressman Steven LaTourette is married to lobbyist Jennifer LaTourette. Or that former Senator Phil Gramm is married to former Commodity Futures Trading Commission head Wendy Lee Gramm. Recently, the *Los Angeles Times* even broke some new ground by reporting on journalists married to political operatives.

But there are many more couples that the press doesn't note until they happen to touch on a breaking story. Take Cathie Martin, former communications director for Dick Cheney. Until she became a star witness at the Libby trial, few Washingtonians had ever heard of her. (To be sure, being a communications director for Dick Cheney is almost a contradiction in terms.) Even fewer knew that she was married to Kevin Martin, chair of the Federal Communications Commission. Now that we do know, however, we have a clearer sense of the lines of power in Washington. In this case, we once again see the reach of the vice president into the federal bureaucracy. That's useful information to file away, but before the Martins were in the news, there was little reason for journalists to print it.

Some other things keep journalists quiet: We, too, have spouses and value our privacy. Also, like most people, we're loath to antagonize colleagues. As a young political journalist, I, for instance, might like to be on friendly terms with Jim VandeHei, former *Washington Post* reporter and founder of a new political publication, *The Politico*. Jim knows a lot of the people I know, or hope to know, and he might be in a position to hire me. This makes me less likely to bring up that Jim happens to be married to former Tom DeLay staffer Autumn Hanna VandeHei. Sure, Jim has written numerous articles about Tom DeLay for the *Washington Post* without disclosing that Autumn once worked for DeLay, and sure, for all I know, it's possible—*possible*—he may have given DeLay overly favorable treatment as a result. But, hey, I'm sure Jim's reporting is trustworthy, his marriage is his business, and I prefer to stay on his good side. (Come to think of it, I think Jim VandeHei may be the greatest journalist in human history.)

Congratulations to me, then, for I know about Jim and Autumn and you don't, and that's fine with all three of us. I've just taken a step further into Club Washington. It is, of course, a comfortable club with plenty of seating in which many relationships similar to that of Jim and Autumn go unmentioned. Over here by the miniature quiches is Jim O'Beirne,

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who, as White House liaison to the Pentagon, according to the *Washington Post*, screened staff for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, and here's his wife, *National Review* writer Kate O'Beirne. Hi, Jim. Can I have a job in reconstruction? Just a little joke. Hi, Kate. Nice piece on Iraq. And here by the chicken satay skewers is neoconservative scholar Robert Kagan, husband of Victoria Nuland, current ambassador to NATO. Hi, Bob, nice piece on NATO. And, wow, here come Clarence and Virginia Thomas. Talk about A-list.

But, okay, given the nature of this piece, I suppose I do have to step out of the club for a second and confront Jim VandeHei about his marriage. Luckily for me, Jim is perfectly agreeable and says that he met Autumn when he was working for *Roll Call* and she was working in DeLay's office. "It didn't help me or her, because I was doing investigative pieces on DeLay at the time," he says, adding, "I'd already done a lot of reporting on DeLay." Jim also notes that his wife's most recent employment was as a consultant for what he calls a "nonpartisan nonprofit," the Rebecca Project for Human Rights, a legal advocacy group for poor families grappling with substance abuse. See? Told you I didn't need to bring it up.

Ultimately, when it comes to Washington marriages, the problem with Washington is rarely the possible conflicts of interest. It's the concealment of them. We're not doing anything wrong, is what we think. If we start dragging out information on who's married to whom, then people will just think we're doing something wrong. Besides, we already let our boss/standards editor/colleague know about this.

Well, tough luck. And here's a reminder: the public out there already holds this city in abysmal regard. Sure, *I* know you're nice and honest, but they don't. If you don't tell them this personal stuff, and they find out on their own, they'll get angry and make your life harder.

Therefore, in the interests of getting things moving, this piece is going to wind down by offering some new rules for this town. Forget general exhortations about guidelines or disclosure. Instead, how about we try something tougher and get a little bit specific? Some suggestions, then, on a new approach to power couple ethics in Washington:

1. If you're married to an elected official, forget about lobbying. We'll make a law against that. And if you're married to a lobbyist, forget about being an elected official. We'll outlaw that, too. "Wait," you ask, "if I'm a congresswoman and I fall in love with a lobbyist and marry him, does that mean that either he quits lobbying or I quit Congress?" Yes. And spare us the moaning about how that means one of you can't work. There's a vast, wealthy metro area out there. Go open a Starbucks.
2. Many government officials, including any federal appointees requiring Senate confirmation, must submit public financial disclosure forms. Amend this rule to include public disclosure of the profession of one's spouse. Expand the disclosure requirements to include all congressional staffers.
3. Journalists love to put "full disclosure" in parenthetical statements, but, compared to federal appointees, we disclose barely a thing, and only when it suits us. Let newspapers and other journalistic media maintain disclosure Web sites where employees list potential conflicts of interest, including professional affiliations of spouses.
4. Let us know if your husband is the author of the Surge.

Washington's many power couples are evidence of a city that's tossed aside its old sexist clubbiness and replaced it with a new nonsexist clubbiness.

Does this solve the problem? Not entirely. Is it fair? Not really. Girlfriends and boyfriends and lovers of various sorts get a free pass. (So do partners in same-sex unions—although, if lawmakers won't recognize them, then maybe they deserve the break.) Plenty of conflicts of interest and loopholes would remain. But that's the way law works. It's never entirely effective and never entirely fair. All it can do is improve on what we have.

Again, none of this is to suggest that Washington is awash in power couple misdeeds. Quite the contrary: power couples are a thing of joy. (Okay, so maybe careerist Washington duos don't cheer you per se, but remember that they exist because women have made belated gains in a notably atavistic city.) They do, however, form a web of influence, and influence, if we've learned anything over the centuries, bears watching. So, yes, Washingtonians, enjoy your coziness, but be aware that soon the tax for such luxuries must be a small sliver of your privacy, payable in disclosure of your significant other. You may fear what those outside of Washington will say when they find out. But don't underestimate them so. Remember, they have working spouses, too. WM

T. A. Frank is a consulting editor of the *Washington Monthly*. His wife, Jody Gibney, manages Norton Internet Security at Symantec.

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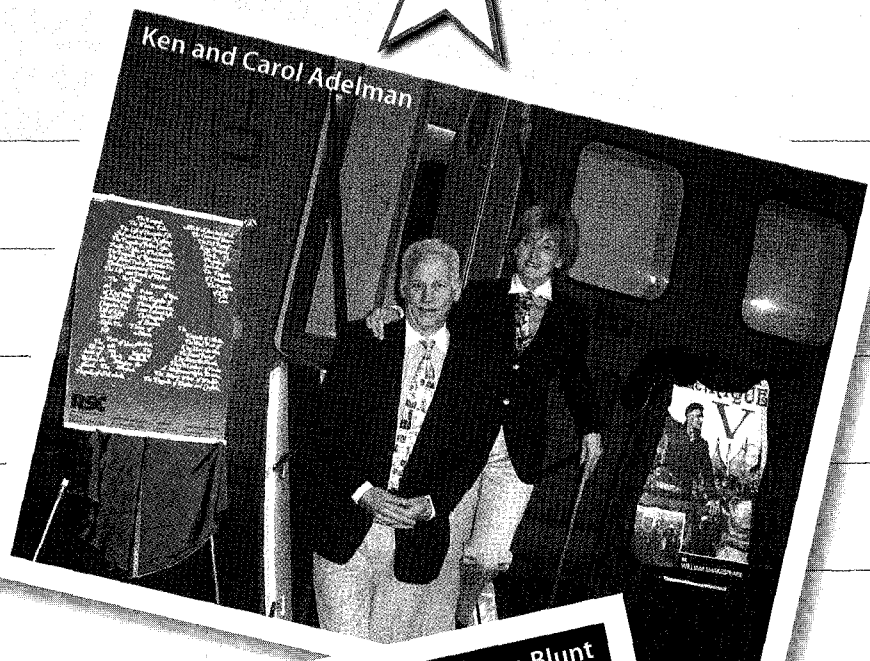
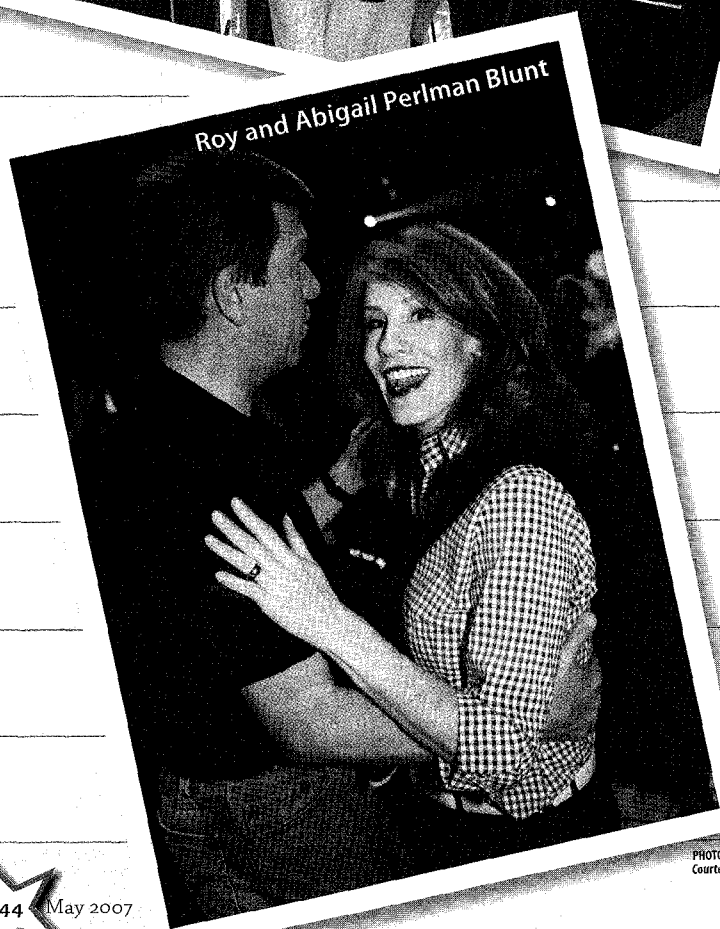
WASHINGTON'S 50 POWER


Ken and Carol Adelman


Roy and Abigail Perlman Blunt

Kirk Adams *chief of staff, SEIU*
Cecile Richards *president, Planned Parenthood*

Ken Adelman *member, Defense Policy Board*
Carol Adelman *director, Center for Global Prosperity, Hudson Institute*

Wayne Berman *managing director, Ogilvy Government Relations (formerly the Federalist Group)*
Lea Berman *former White House social secretary*

Jeff Bingaman *U.S. senator (D-N. Mex.)*
Anne Bingaman *chairman and CEO, Soundpath Conferencing Services*

Roy Blunt *House minority whip*
Abigail Perlman Blunt *top lobbyist, Philip Morris (Altria Group)*

Robert Borosage *executive director, Campaign for America's Future*
Barbara Shailor *director, international department, AFL-CIO*

Ron Brownstein *political columnist,* Los Angeles Times
Eileen McMenamin *communications director, Sen. John McCain, (R-Ariz.)*

James Carville *Democratic strategist*
Mary Matalin *Republican strategist*

David Castagnetti *founding partner and lobbyist, Mehlman Vogel Castagnetti*
Ann Castagnetti *Democratic operative*

Kent Conrad *U.S. senator (D-N. Dak.)*
Lucy Calautti *lobbyist, Major League Baseball*

Dick Cheney *vice president of the United States*
Lynne Cheney *author and conservative activist*

Michael Chertoff *secretary of homeland security*
Meryl Justin Chertoff *director, Sandra Day O'Connor Project on the State of the Judiciary, Georgetown Law School*

PHOTOS:
Courtesy of the Adelmans; *Washington Life*

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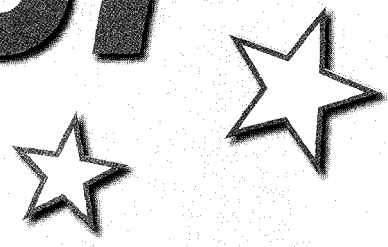
SIZZLINGEST COUPLES!



by Nick Baumann and Oliver Haydock

He's a longtime field operative for the labor movement. She's the daughter of former Texas Governor Ann Richards, and was a senior aide to Nancy Pelosi. In 2004, she ran the Democratic turnout operation America Votes, which is funded in part by the SEIU. They did not return a call for comment.

He's a former Reagan administration official and prominent neoconservative, and was a leading advocate for the Iraq War, which she also supported. When not arguing for the invasion of Middle Eastern countries, the couple runs Movers & Shakespeares, a company that uses the work of the Bard to teach management lessons to corporations—at $24,000 a pop. They once convinced Donald Rumsfeld to dress up in full Elizabethan regalia.

He served in the first Bush administration, and helped run the Bush-Cheney transition team in 2000. She worked for Lynne Cheney and the Bush reelection campaign before moving to the first lady's office in December 2004. That year, the couple raised more than $200,000 for Bush, earning the coveted rank of Rangers. They're known for throwing exclusive parties for D.C.'s political elite at their Embassy Row manse.

She ran the antitrust division of the Justice Department under President Clinton. In 1999, after leaving office, she took $2.5 million from Global Crossing to lobby for an FCC ruling that Global Crossing had an interest in. Her current company, Soundpath, provides conferencing services to law firms.

During their 2002 courtship, he tried to insert into the bill creating the Department of Homeland Security an unrelated provision benefiting Philip Morris, for whom she was a lobbyist. His son also worked for Philip Morris at the time. The move was so brazen that even Tom DeLay and Dennis Hastert objected, and the provision was removed. He told the *Washington Post* that he pushed the provision because he thought it was good policy.

The AFL-CIO is a major funder of the Campaign for America's Future, a prominent liberal activist group. He did not return a call for comment.

In an April 2005 *L.A. Times* column, he touted a potential third-party presidential run by McCain. Three weeks later the couple was married. *Times* editors subsequently banned him from covering the senator, but the paper recently announced that he'll write a weekly political column for the op-ed page—steering clear of McCain. He was once married to Nina Easton (see page 50), who, like him, now has a spouse who works for McCain.

He helped orchestrate Bill Clinton's winning presidential campaign in 1992, and since then has established himself as a highly visible Washington pundit and political commentator. She's a longtime GOP operative who's close with Bush 41 and Vice President Cheney, and worked in the current Bush administration's White House Iraq Group, where she helped build support for the war. The couple met as rivals during the '92 presidential campaign.

He's a former top Hill staffer who served as congressional liaison for John Kerry's presidential campaign. She's the sister of Kerry campaign manager Mary Beth Cahill, and ran Kerry's search for a running mate.

She ran his 1986 Senate campaign, and they married a year later. Thanks to new ethics rules, she's no longer permitted to lobby senators. (Because of a loophole in the law for spouses who were already lobbyists when they married, she's the only spouse affected.) She continues to lobby the House.

In 1988, after he suffered his third heart attack, she wrote *The Body Politic*, a novel in which the vice president dies in office of a heart attack while in the arms of a TV journalist, and is replaced by his wife. The novel was rereleased in 2000 after he was selected as George W. Bush's running mate.

During the 1990s, he was a partner at Latham & Watkins and special counsel to the U.S. Senate Whitewater Committee. She was a longtime lobbyist on homeland security issues for the state of New Jersey and worked briefly at FEMA, where she helped integrate the agency into the Department of Homeland Security, which her husband now heads.

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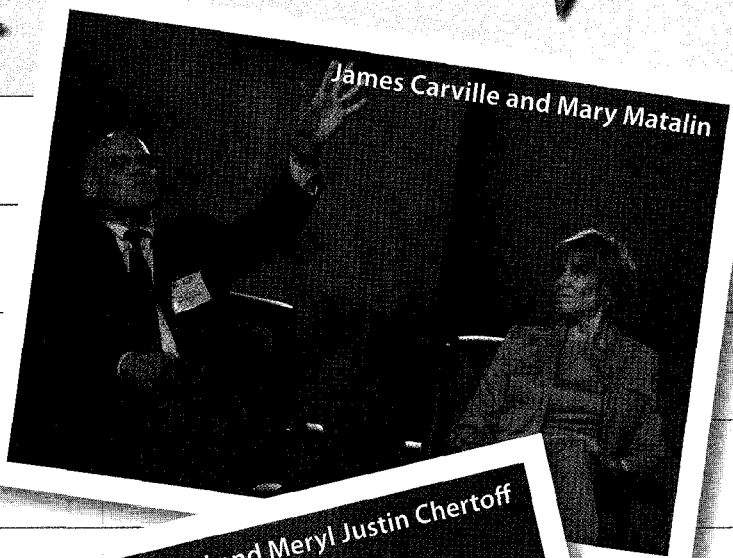
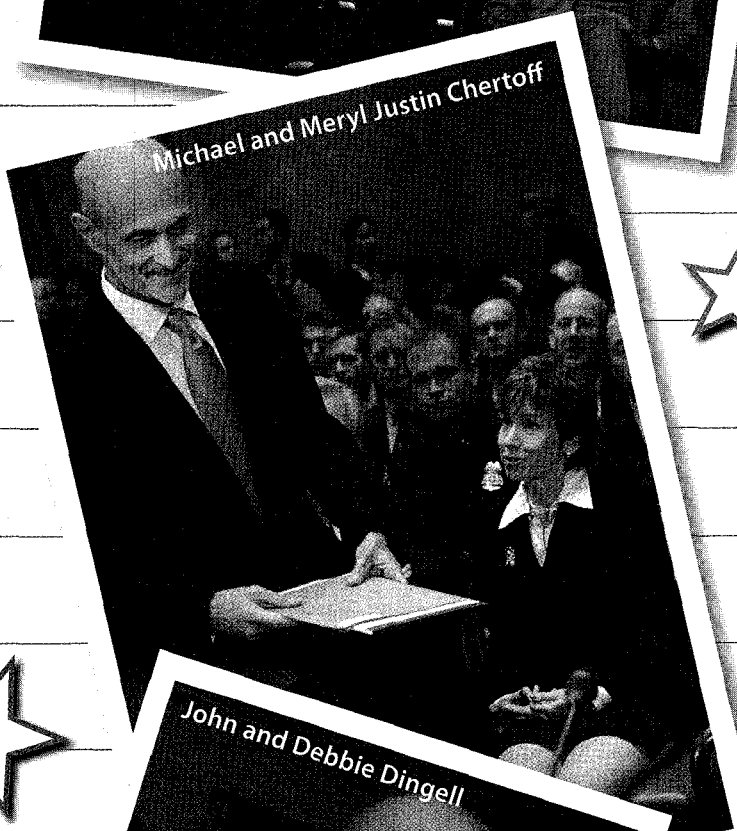
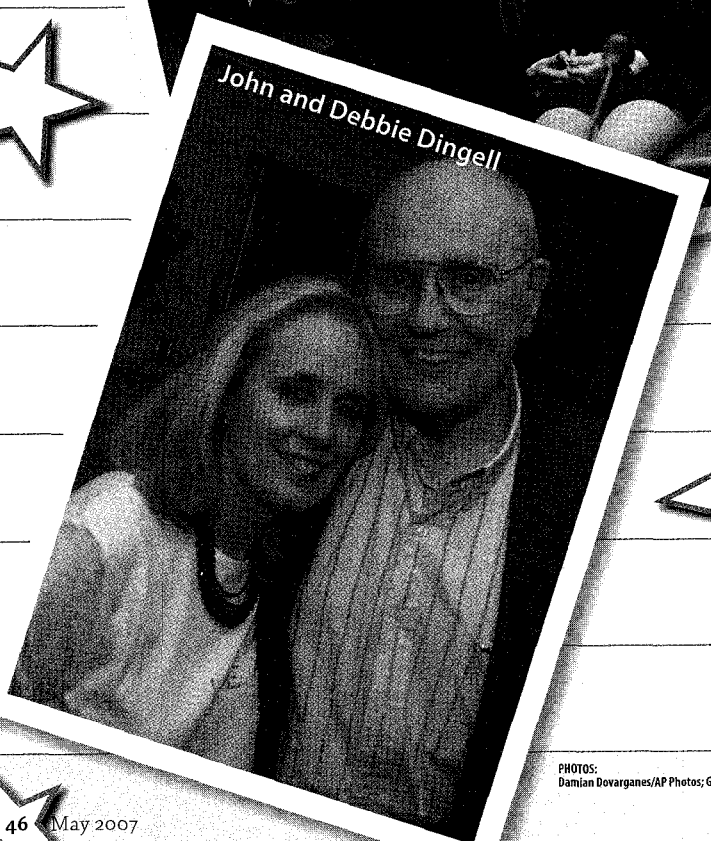

James Carville and Mary Matalin


Michael and Meryl Justin Chertoff


John and Debbie Dingell

Bill Clinton *42nd president of the United States*
Hillary Clinton *U.S. senator (D-N.Y.)*

Matthew Cooper *Washington editor,* Portfolio *magazine*
Mandy Grunwald *Democratic strategist*

Chris Cox *chairman, SEC*
Rebecca Cox *senior lobbyist, Continental Airlines*

Randy Devalk *senior policy adviser, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid*
Cybele Bjorklund *staff director, health subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means*

Joseph diGenova *founding partner, diGenova & Toensing LLP*
Victoria Toensing *founding partner, diGenova & Toensing LLP*

John Dingell *U.S. congressman (D-Mich.), and chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce*
Debbie Dingell *executive director for public affairs, General Motors*

Bob Dole *former U.S. senator (R-Kan.) and Republican presidential nominee*
Elizabeth Dole *U.S. senator (R-N.C.)*

Byron Dorgan *U.S. senator (D-N. Dak.)*
Kimberly Dorgan *senior lobbyist, American Council of Life Insurers (ACLI)*

John Engler *president, National Association of Manufacturers*
Michelle Engler *board of directors, Freddie Mac*

Joseph Gildenhorn *chairman of the board, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*
Alma Gildenhorn *trustee, Aspen Institute and the Kennedy Center*

Alan Greenspan *former chairman, Federal Reserve*
Andrea Mitchell *chief foreign affairs correspondent, NBC News*

David Gregory *chief White House correspondent, NBC News*
Beth Wilkinson *general counsel, Fannie Mae*

David Hirschmann *senior vice president, Chamber of Commerce*
Susan Hirschmann *lobbyist, Williams & Jensen*

Brit Hume *host, Fox News'* Special Report With Brit Hume
Kim Hume *homemaker, former vice president, Fox News*

Al Hunt *Washington editor, Bloomberg News*
Judy Woodruff *senior correspondent, PBS's* Newshour With Jim Lehrer

Robert Kagan *neoconservative author and cofounder, Project for a New American Century (PNAC)*
Victoria Nuland *United States permanent representative, NATO*

PHOTOS:
Damian Dovarganes/AP Photos; Gerald Herbert/AP Photos; *Washington Life*

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He was the Democratic governor of Arkansas before serving as president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He now runs the Clinton Foundation, which focuses on global health and economic issues. She was elected to the Senate from New York in 2000 and is now the front-runner for the Democratic nomination for president in 2008. In 1993, she ran his administration's unsuccessful effort to pass universal health care legislation.

He's a former *Washington Monthly* editor who, as a White House reporter for *Time*, learned from Karl Rove in 2003 that Valerie Plame worked at the CIA on WMD issues. She's a veteran of Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign who designed ads for Hillary's 2000 and 2006 Senate races, and will help with her presidential run as well.

In 2006, after he had given up his job as a California GOP congressman to run the SEC, she used a lapel pin given to members' spouses to allow them to visit their partners at work to gain access to an area of the Capitol that's normally off-limits to lobbyists, but where she believed a pension bill in which Continental had an interest was being drafted. He's been mentioned as a possible replacement for Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

As a senior adviser to the last two Democratic Senate leaders, he's one of the most influential aides on Capitol Hill. In 2005, she exposed the Bush administration's effort to prevent the disclosure to Congress of the actual cost of the Medicare prescription-drug bill, after being tipped off by a government source.

During the Clinton impeachment saga, the couple, who founded their own law firm, frequently appeared in tandem as co-commentators. As chief counsel to Senator Barry Goldwater, she authored the 1982 law making it a crime to reveal the identity of covert agents that provided the basis for Patrick Fitzgerald's investigation.

He's the auto industry's staunchest ally in Congress, and has consistently sidelined efforts to raise fuel-economy standards. She was a top lobbyist for GM, and is now a senior executive at the company. He's been in the House for 51 years—nearly as long as his wife, 52, has been alive.

He's a World War II veteran who served as Senate majority leader in the '80s and '90s. In 1996, he was the GOP presidential nominee, and was defeated by President Clinton. He was recently appointed by President Bush as co-chair of the commission to investigate problems at Walter Reed. She was transportation secretary under President Ronald Reagan, and in 2000 was the first woman to mount a serious presidential run. For much of the '80s, the couple was by far the most prominent power couple in Washington.

Both he and the ACLI were crucial forces behind the movement to keep the estate tax when Republicans tried to repeal it in 2005. Because she was a lobbyist before her marriage, she was unaffected by recent ethics laws restricting lobbying by members' spouses, and can legally lobby her husband. They did not return a call for comment.

He was Michigan's Republican governor from 1991 to 2003. Later, he was a government lobbyist for Electronic Data Systems, which received more than $24 million from Freddie Mac for business consulting in 2003. She was appointed to Freddie Mac's board in 2001. Through a spokesman, he told us he didn't know anything about the contract until after he left the company.

He was Bush 41's ambassador to Switzerland, and is a founding partner at the JBG Companies, one of D.C.'s largest real estate firms. She's a major fund-raiser for her alma mater, the University of Maryland, and is involved in numerous charitable and arts organizations. In 1996, they were named "Washingtonians of the Year" by *Washingtonian* magazine.

He's a disciple of Ayn Rand who last year stepped down as Fed chairman after serving for nearly two decades. Before the couple married, he dated Barbara Walters. Andrea's a longtime TV news reporter who acknowledged in her autobiography the conflicts between her relationship and her career: "It gave me an uncomfortable feeling that I might be gaining unusual access, but losing some independence," she wrote.

The two met when Gregory, then a field reporter for NBC, was covering the Timothy McVeigh trial, for which she was a government prosecutor. Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff, with whom she worked at Latham & Watkins, attended their son's baby shower.

She was Tom DeLay's chief of staff from 1997 to 2002, when the Texan was at the height of his power. During the 1980s, she worked with Ralph Reed, Jack Abramoff, and Grover Norquist as a member of the College Republicans. Later, the couple took trips at Abramoff's expense, valued at more than $85,000. Williams & Jensen lobbies on behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. They did not return a call for comment.

He spent twenty-three years at ABC before joining Fox in 1996. She recently left the news channel, where she served as D.C. bureau chief as well as vice president. When Fox News launched in 1996, they hired her before him.

He's a former Washington editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, and was a commentator on CNN's *The Capital Gang* until the show's cancellation in 2005. She was until recently a veteran CNN political correspondent, and was the network's on-air anchor during 9/11.

He's been a vocal supporter of the Iraq War and recently wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post* declaring the "Surge" to be working splendidly—without mentioning that his brother, Fred, is the architect of the strategy. Prior to joining NATO, Victoria worked in the office of the vice president.

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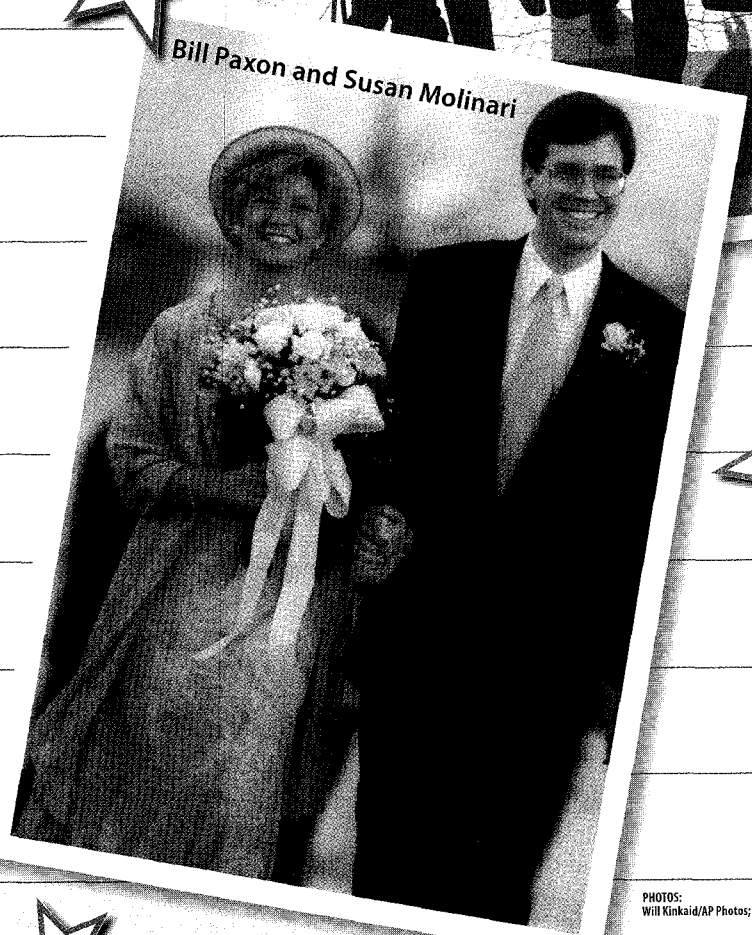
Byron and Kim Dorgan

Kevin and Cathie Martin


Bill Paxon and Susan Molinari

Howard Kurtz *media critic and columnist,* Washington Post
Sheri Annis *president, Fourth Estate Strategies PR firm*

James Lafferty *executive director, Christian Seniors Association (CSA)*
Andrea Lafferty *lobbyist, Traditional Values Coalition (TVC)*

Tom Lantos *U.S. congressman (D-Calif.), and chair, House Committee on Foreign Relations*
Annette Lantos *executive director, Congressional Human Rights Caucus (CHRC)*

David Leiter *senior executive vice president of government relations, ML Strategies*
Tamera Luzzatto *chief of staff, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)*

Kevin Martin *chair, Federal Communications Commission*
Catherine Martin *deputy assistant to the president and deputy communications director for policy and planning*

Daniel Mattoon *founder, Mattoon & Associates*
Jane Mattoon *former treasurer, Dennis Hastert's Keep Our Majority PAC (KOMPAC)*

Timothy McBride *lobbyist, Freddie Mac*
Anita McBride *chief of staff to the first lady*

Mitch McConnell *Senate minority leader*
Elaine Chao *secretary of labor*

John Negroponte *deputy secretary of state*
Diana Villiers Negroponte *trustee, Freedom House*

Jim O'Beirne *White House liaison, Department of Defense*
Kate O'Beirne *Washington editor,* National Review

Bernard Robert Okun *chief lobbyist, NBC*
Deanna Tanner Okun *commissioner and former chair, International Trade Commission (ITC)*

Bill Paxon *lobbyist, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld*
Susan Molinari *chairman, the Washington Group*

Mark Penn *pollster and strategist, Hillary '08*
Nancy Jacobson *veteran Democratic fund-raiser*

Philip Perry *former general counsel, Department of Homeland Security*
Elizabeth Cheney *former deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs*

Kurt Pfotenhauer *senior vice president, Mortgage Bankers Association*
Nancy Pfotenhauer *conservative activist*

Walter Pincus *national security reporter,* Washington Post
Ann Pincus *director of communications, International Relief and Development*

PHOTOS:
Will Kinkaid/AP Photos; Kevin Wolf/AP Photos; Courtesy of Bill Paxon and Susan Molinari

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He hosts CNN's *Reliable Source*, which covers the news media. She's a former conservative consultant who served as Arnold Schwarzenegger's spokeswoman during his first political campaign, in 2002, before the couple was married. While discussing Arnold's political prospects on a 2005 edition of *Reliable Source*, he disclosed that his wife had worked for Schwarzenegger's "school initiative" in 2002, but not that she was later his spokeswoman. She gave up political work after their marriage.

He's a former press secretary to Tom DeLay. She's the daughter of TVC founder Lou Sheldon, and was recently named one of D.C.'s top lobbyists by *Washingtonian* magazine. Sheldon founded CSA as a "project" of TVC, then installed his son-in-law Lafferty at its helm—though the groups have rarely disclosed these ties.

He cofounded the CHRC in 1983. Both are Hungarian Jews who escaped the Nazi occupation together as children.

He was a top Department of Energy official during the Clinton administration, and also served as John Kerry's chief of staff. She has a reputation as an adept cloakroom politician.

As chair of the FCC, he's pushed for further media deregulation, a major goal of large media companies. During the 2000 recount, he was one of the first GOP operatives to report to Florida. She was previously a top press aide to Dick Cheney, and her courtroom testimony in the Scooter Libby trial gave Washington a crucial window into the White House's strategy for going after Joe Wilson. They're among the most watched young GOP power players in town.

He's an experienced Republican operative who started PodestaMattoon in 2001 with Tony Podesta (see page 50), and built it into one of D.C.'s most prominent lobbying firms. Prior to that, he was a longtime lobbyist for BellSouth, and remains, according to Public Citizen, "the foremost representative of the Bell lobby." In 2002, while she ran Hastert's PAC, he worked with the speaker to pass a major telecom bill supported by the Bells. They did not return a call for comment.

Both have been major Washington players for the automobile industry. She worked as a management consultant for the American Automobile Manufacturers Association while he was a top lobbyist at DaimlerChrysler.

According to an investigation by the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, "Chao attends her husband's fund-raisers, chats with his donors and seeds her agency with his former aides." In one incident cited by the paper, a coal company that has been a major donor to McConnell was under investigation for water contamination by the Labor Department—until she took over the department in 2001 and quickly wrapped up the probe. Many observers were surprised by the small fine—later reduced further—that the department ultimately assessed.

She raises private money for Freedom House, which promotes democracy abroad and is funded in part by the State Department—where he has wielded influence since the Reagan years, when he was the powerful ambassador to Honduras. He has also served as intelligence czar, UN ambassador, and ambassador to Iraq.

In 2003, according to the *Washington Post*, Jim took the lead in staffing the Coalition Provisional Authority with inexperienced Republican loyalists, many of whom had posted their resumes at the Heritage Foundation—where she used to serve as vice president. As a prominent conservative pundit and frequent CNN guest, she's been a supporter of the Iraq War and defended the CPA's performance.

General Electric, NBC's parent company, has had frequent business before the ITC. She told us she recuses herself from cases involving General Electric.

They're both former GOP representatives from New York turned lobbyists. He famously proposed to her on the House floor—and on his knees—in 1994. Her response: "Yes, but get up." Shortly after, they quit Congress, became Washington GOP power lobbyists, and lived happily ever after.

He was Bill Clinton's pollster, and is now perhaps Hillary's most important adviser. She recently joined the campaign as a fund-raiser. The well-connected couple have deep ties to the centrist New Democrat movement, and are among the most prominent hosts on Washington's Democratic social circuit.

At DHS, he blocked measures that would have required the chemical industry to safeguard its plants against terrorism (see "Dick Cheney's Dangerous Son-in-Law," *Washington Monthly*, March 2007). She's Dick Cheney's daughter, and one of her father's many loyalists scattered throughout the executive branch. Neither had relevant policy experience or training before they were appointed to their positions.

He's a former chief of staff to Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.). At the age of 24, she served on President George H. W. Bush's transition team, and was appointed by the current president as a delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. She is a director emerita of the Independent Women's Forum, an antifeminist organization funded by conservative philanthropist Richard Mellon Scaife. In 2004, *Washingtonian* magazine named her one of the city's most important conservative leaders.

He's a former editor of the *New Republic* who has covered just about everything, from Watergate to Plame-gate, for the *Post*. She's an Arkansas native who was appointed by President Clinton to the U.S. Information Agency, a federal body devoted to public diplomacy that was abolished in 1999.

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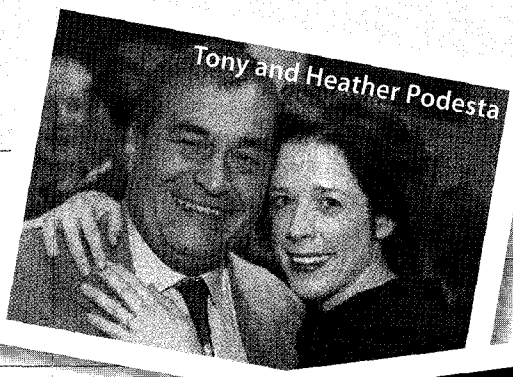
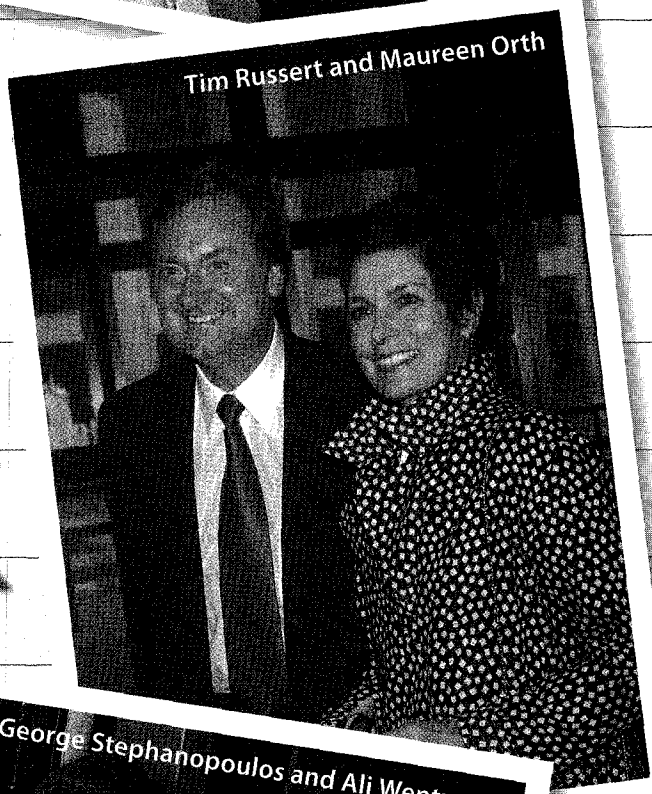
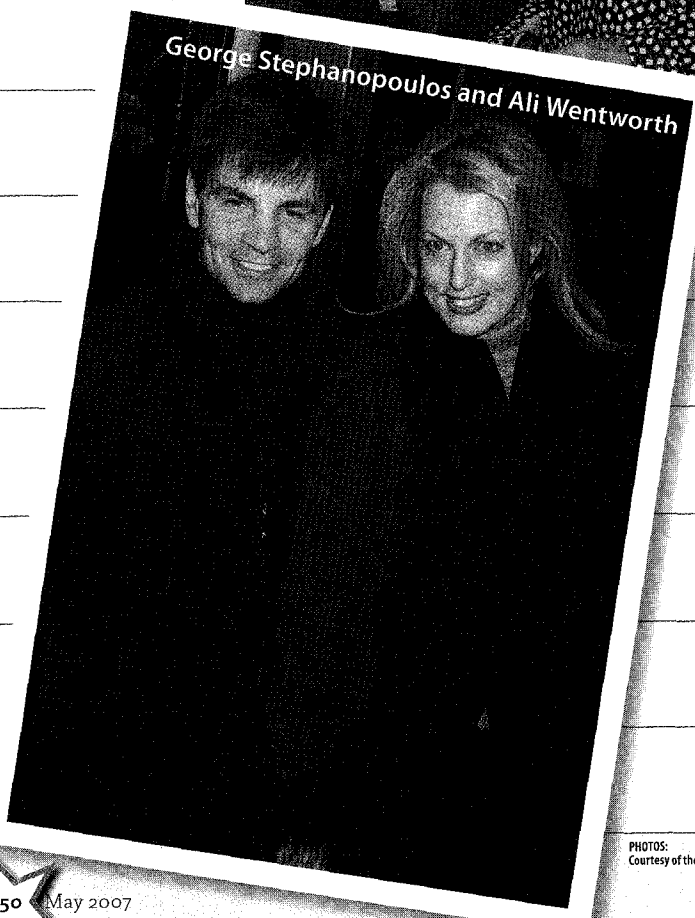

Tony and Heather Podesta


Tim Russert and Maureen Orth


George Stephanopoulos and Ali Wentworth

Tony Podesta *founder, Podesta Group*
Heather Podesta *founder, Heather Podesta & Partners*

Ken Pollack *Middle East scholar, Brookings Institution*
Andrea Koppel *congressional correspondent, CNN*

Stephen Rademaker *vice president, Barbour Griffith & Rogers*
Danielle Pletka *vice president for foreign and defense policy studies, American Enterprise Institute*

John Reilly *former commissioner, Federal Trade Commission (1964–67)*
Margaret Warner *senior correspondent, PBS's* News Hour With Jim Lehrer

Tim Russert *host, NBC's* Meet the Press
Maureen Orth *special correspondent,* Vanity Fair

Peter Rodman *senior fellow for foreign policy, Brookings Institution*
Veronique Rodman *director of public affairs, American Enterprise Institute*

Russ Schriefer *media strategist, McCain '08*
Nina Easton *Washington bureau chief,* Fortune

Stephen Solarz *senior counselor, APCO Worldwide*
Nina Solarz *advisory committee member, David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies*

George Stephanopoulos *host of ABC's* This Week
Ali Wentworth *actress*

Clarence Thomas *Supreme Court justice*
Virginia Lamp Thomas *liaison to the Bush administration, Heritage Foundation*

Geoff Tracy *owner, Chef Geoff's restaurant*
Norah O'Donnell *chief Washington correspondent, MSNBC*

Jeffrey Weiss *director, BKSH & Associates*
Juleanna Glover Weiss *senior adviser, Ashcroft Group*

Fred Wertheimer *president, Democracy 21*
Linda Cozby Wertheimer *correspondent, NPR*

Joe Wilson *former U.S. diplomat*
Valerie Plame *former CIA officer*

John Wood *U.S. attorney, Kansas City*
Julie Myers *assistant secretary, Department of Homeland Security*

David Wurmser *former undersecretary for arms control and international security affairs, State Department*
Meyrav Wurmser *director and senior fellow, Center for Middle East Policy, Hudson Institute*

PHOTOS:
Courtesy of the Podestas; Scott Eells/Getty Images; Jennifer Graylock/AP Photos

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Both are among the best-connected lobbyists in Washington, and have helped raise millions in campaign funds in recent years, mostly for Democrats. Tony's brother is John Podesta, who was President Clinton's chief of staff and now runs the Center for American Progress.

He's a former CIA officer who ran the National Security Council's Persian Gulf affairs division under President Clinton. His 2002 book, *The Threatening Storm*, about the security threat posed by Saddam Hussein, was crucial in persuading many liberals to support the Iraq War. She's Ted Koppel's daughter. The couple met in 1999 when he was a source for a story she was reporting on Iraq.

He served as policy director for national security affairs for then Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, and before that was a protégé of John Bolton at the State Department. She's a leading neocon who supported the Iraq War and opposes diplomatic engagement with Iran.

He served as FTC commissioner during the Johnson administration and recently retired from private practice. As a trade lawyer, he worked on the United States' dispute with Canada over its cheap lumber imports. Margaret regularly covers the FTC and telecommunications issues. They did not return a call for comment.

His testimony during the Scooter Libby trial was crucial to the prosecution's case. She covers pop culture for *Vanity Fair*. Her recent book is *The Importance of Being Famous: Behind the Scenes of the Celebrity-Industrial Complex*.

He was a senior editor at *National Review*, a founding signatory of the Project for the New American Century—which argued during the '90s for a policy of regime change in Iraq—and a top official at the Bush administration's Defense Department. Both are close allies of John Bolton, her onetime boss at AEI.

He's a longtime Republican media consultant who in 2004 helped create the infamous ad showing John Kerry windsurfing. She's a regular political analyst on Fox News, and recently disclosed her husband's ties to McCain on air for the first time, after being asked about the subject by the *L.A. Times*.

He's a former Democratic congressman from New York who founded the International Crisis Group in 1995 with former Maine Senator George Mitchell. In the mid-1990s, Nina pleaded guilty to writing a bad check on the House Bank and to stealing money from a charity, which she headed, that provided medical supplies for Turkish women. She avoided jail time, but was sentenced to probation and 50 hours of community service.

He shot to fame as a top aide to Bill Clinton during his 1992 presidential run. After a brief time as White House press secretary, he made the transition to TV news. During her short-lived CBS morning show, she once boasted of the couple's "healthy" sex life.

She has a history as a fiercely partisan GOP fighter. As a congressional aide in the '90s, she coordinated Newt Gingrich's aggressive effort to dig up dirt on the Clinton administration. Then in 2000, with the result of the presidential election still in doubt, she solicited resumes on behalf of the Bush campaign from House and Senate aides, "for transition purposes." A week or so later, he helped give the presidency to Bush.

He's a power-chef whose restaurant hosted Scooter Libby the night before his conviction. She was recently named by *Washingtonian* magazine as one of D.C.'s 100 most powerful women. The couple is a fixture on the Washington social scene.

She's a former press secretary to Vice President Cheney and is best known as one of D.C.'s premiere hostesses. She's also a former director at Clark & Weinstock, where she lobbied for the post-Saddam Iraqi ambassador to the United States. BKSH once handled a State Department contract to represent the Iraq National Congress.

For decades, he has been Washington's most prominent advocate of campaign finance reform. In 2001, she reported on the debate over the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform legislation. "We've gone out of our way to avoid situations where she is reporting on what I'm doing," he told us.

As deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad in 1990, he was praised by President George H. W. Bush for sheltering more than 100 Americans despite Saddam's promise to execute anyone who refused to hand over foreigners. His 2003 *New York Times* op-ed debunking Bush administration claims that Saddam had sought uranium in Niger led the White House to imply that she had improperly chosen him to investigate the Niger story—and to blow her cover as a covert CIA operative.

Until recently, he was DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff's chief of staff. She's the niece of former Joint Chiefs chair Richard Myers, and had no experience in homeland security issues when she joined DHS, but was known for her loyalty to the White House.

She's a former director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, which scrutinizes the reporting of Middle Eastern media outlets and has been accused of being a propaganda machine for the Israeli government. He wrote a 1999 book pushing for the overthrow of Saddam and the installation of Ahmed Chalabi as leader of Iraq. With Richard Perle and Douglas Feith, the Wurmsers authored a 1996 report that argued for invading Iraq and "remaking" the Middle East.

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Save the musicians.

Shannon Brinkman

For 17 years the **JAZZ FOUNDATION OF AMERICA** has been at the forefront of providing emergency assistance and long-term support to hundreds of veteran jazz and blues musicians across the country. Katrina left countless New Orleans musicians and their families unemployed and homeless, with their lives literally washed away.

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"The Jazz Foundation of America has been a lifesaver to so many musicians from New Orleans, giving them the opportunity to work and earn money with dignity. They've done more to help the New Orleans musicians then any other group that I know of."
– Dr. Michael White, noted New Orleans bandleader/musician/historian

HOUSING: Housed hundreds of Musicians in crisis, this year alone, many with small children, thanks to E*TRADE FINANCIAL, preventing evictions, homelessness and mortgage foreclosures.

EMPLOYMENT: Created the first employment program for New Orleans musicians in 8 states where they've been forced to settle, providing over 3,200 individual gig opportunities so far. With grants totaling one million dollars, we've been able to put hundreds of New Orleans musicians back to work, performing in schools and nursing homes, thanks to "Saint Agnes" Varis, Dick Parsons & TIME WARNER, Pearl Jam, Danny Glover, Elvis Costello, and you.

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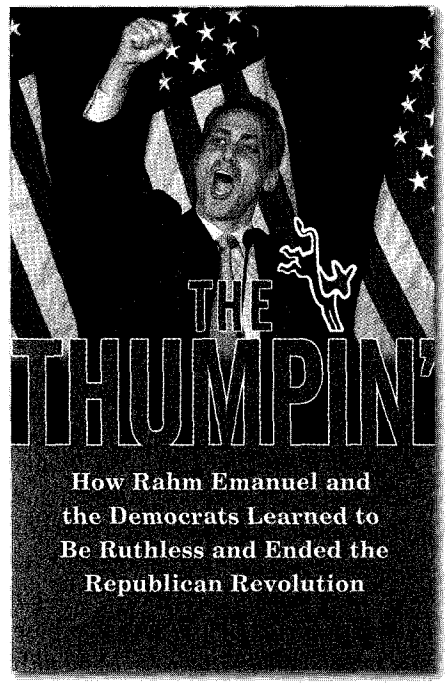
THE WARRIOR-WONK

Rahm Emanuel's moral center

By Mark Schmitt



The Thumpin': How Rahm Emanuel and the Democrats Learned to Be Ruthless and Ended the Republican Revolution

By Naftali Bendavid
Doubleday, 272 pp.

There are, we are told, two kinds of congressional elections. In most even-numbered years, the issues are local and only a few incumbents are vulnerable, usually for reasons unique to them or their districts. Occasionally, as in 1994, an election is decided on national issues and a strong partisan or ideological wave loosens the bonds between even the hardest-working members of Congress and their constituents, and new members are swept in on essentially identical messages.

Last year's election was something a little different, a national wave on one level but an intensely local election on another, in which each Democratic victory took advantage of the particular circumstances of each challenger, each incumbent, and each district.

The Democrats' mastery of that unusual combination is the work of one man, Rep. Rahm Emanuel, chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee during the year described by *Chicago Tribune* reporter Naftali Bendavid in his new book, *The Thumpin': How Rahm Emanuel and the Democrats Learned to Be Ruthless and Ended the Republican Revolution.* The DCCC chair is typically just a recruiter and fund-raiser in chief for candidates, charged with bullying his colleagues to use the power of their incumbency to raise money for a narrowly targeted set of challengers. Emanuel was all but bred for the job as traditionally defined (he was even a DCCC fund-raiser in his youth), but he turned the job into something else, acting as a strategist for each campaign and expanding the number of targeted races. His role is best captured in a metaphor employed by former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers: "Here comes this tidal wave, and Rahm has them all in sturdy little boats ready to row to shore."

Another way to think of the difference between 2006 and the last truly nationalized election is this: the architect of the 1994 Republican victory, Newt Gingrich, communicated with his candidates by disseminating cassette tapes of his lectures, and memos listing words to use to describe any Democratic opponent. Emanuel operated instead by cell phone, maintaining almost constant two-way contact with all his promising candidates, listening as well as directing. Even at the first stage, in recruiting candidates, for example, Emanuel would target those who hesitated to run because they had young children, calling them constantly just to say, "I'm at a soccer game with my kids," or "I'm at a kindergarten play."

On such anecdotes—many of them involving a cell phone, sometimes being shouted into or thrown—is the legend of Rahm Emanuel built. At one point, he is described as "the Jewish LBJ," and a book about someone who could be called the Jewish LBJ practically writes itself. I won't spoil this thoroughly enjoyable book by stealing the best anecdotes in a review, so I'll mention one that he doesn't include: as a twenty-five-year-old working on Senator Paul Simon's first campaign, Emanuel was known as "the nuclear fund-raiser," and colleagues would gather to eavesdrop on him loudly accusing elderly Jewish donors of betraying the state of Israel if they failed to max out,

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in their grandchildren's names as well as their own, to Simon's campaign. Apparently the strategy worked.

But that alone is not sufficient explanation for Emanuel's achievement in 2006. Screaming, cursing, winning-is-everything political operatives are a dime a dozen in Washington. Screamers, swearers, nuclear fund-raisers, and would-be LBJs are at the top of losing campaigns as well as winning ones. (According to Bendavid, Emanuel's Republican counterpart, Rep. Tom Reynolds, also likened himself to LBJ.) Far more interesting in *The Thumpin'* are the hints of an Emanuel who is—like the real LBJ—deeper and more complicated than someone who just wants to win for the sake of winning. One catches a glimpse of something a little different, a sense of restraint and of purpose that makes Emanuel seem to be a much fuller and more interesting character than he appears on the surface—and probably bears as much responsibility for the Democrats' victory as his louder traits.

Rahm Emanuel started to understand that the rules of politics were changing rapidly.

This is the Emanuel who purposefully refuses to answer his cell phone after Tom DeLay's indictment if he suspects that the caller is going to want a comment on DeLay's troubles, because he doesn't want to get drawn into the story at all, and who similarly holds back, and holds his candidates back, when news of Rep. Mark Foley's seedy instant-message exchange with a House page breaks.

When a promising candidate in Ohio botches his ballot petitions and is forced to run as a write-in candidate in the primary, this Emanuel, while furious at the need to spend money in an unnecessary primary, says, "I think he needs some issues," to center him and get his mind off his screw-up. And that is what makes Emanuel a little different from, say, former Democratic National Committee chair Terry MacAuliffe: he understands that politics has to be about something, and more than just a vague statement of values. After Emanuel was demoted from his position as political director early in the first Clinton administration, Clinton let him return to manage the efforts to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement and the crime bill, two measures that required far more than bullying and swearing to get passed. Emanuel was among the first Democrats to appreciate the need for fundamental tax reform, and he appears from this book to be among the most aggressive in pushing for the Democrats to have a more coherent policy agenda than they had in previous cycles.

In his appreciation of policy, he resembles Bush adviser Karl Rove, except that Rove's view of the relationship between policy and politics is direct—policy employed as an instrument of political tactics—whereas Emanuel's is far more nuanced, seeing policy as a kind of moral center to the experience of politics.

The Thumpin' ends weakly, though, like a bad Robert Altman movie, with a party scene: election night at DCCC headquarters. Nancy Pelosi arrives, hugs Emanuel, mutters, "I've got to call my brother," and leaves. Former Rep. Vic Fazio, who chaired the DCCC in the 1994 cycle, arrives and thanks Emanuel for getting "this huge monkey"—responsibility for twelve years of Republican control—"off my back." Like other awkward passages in the book, this vignette seems intended merely to show that the author was In The Room, something which could have been established more efficiently by using the word "I" once in a while.

What's missing is any kind of distanced perspective on Emanuel's accomplishment or the choices he made along the way. Bendavid mentions, and abruptly dismisses, the critique of liberal bloggers and writers such as John Nichols of the *Nation* who claim that Democrats won despite Emanuel, not because of him, and that he should have done more to support strong antiwar candidates. True, it is the extreme of arrogance for someone who's never run a single campaign to suggest that he could have done better than Emanuel, especially given that the scale of Democratic victory was unimaginable until late last summer. But it should at least be *interesting* for an author who's spent a year covering Emanuel to consider why some of his most heavily recruited and overfunded candidates lost, while several others who actually defeated Emanuel's picks in the primary, and were written off as too liberal for their districts—notably John Yarmuth of Kentucky and Carol Shea-Porter of New Hampshire—were the surprise winners on November 7.

Here's my take on the perspective missing from *The Thumpin'*: The rules of politics are changing rapidly. There's an appetite for clear statements of position, whether on the war or economic inequality, and more room to bring in new voters and new ideas. Rahm Emanuel, the finest practitioner of politics under the old rules—the Clinton rules—started to understand this. He understood that he had to "open up the map," for example, and bring robust challenges in more districts than previous DCCC chairs. On his own, Emanuel got halfway there. Pushed by circumstances—by being on the road and listening; by candidates like Harry Mitchell in Arizona, who emerged on his own and then got Emanuel's attention; by the need to compromise with Howard Dean's fifty-state strategy; and by liberal bloggers, who did get Emanuel's ear—he went even further, resisting the pull back in the old, narrowing direction from Clinton-era operatives such as James Carville. Could he have gone even further, and recognized that a plain-speaking liberal could make as strong a candidate in 2006 as an admiral? Yes, but to point that out is not to diminish the extraordinary accomplishment, and how much Rahm Emanuel adapted to a rapidly changing political world. WM

Mark Schmitt is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a columnist for the *American Prospect*.

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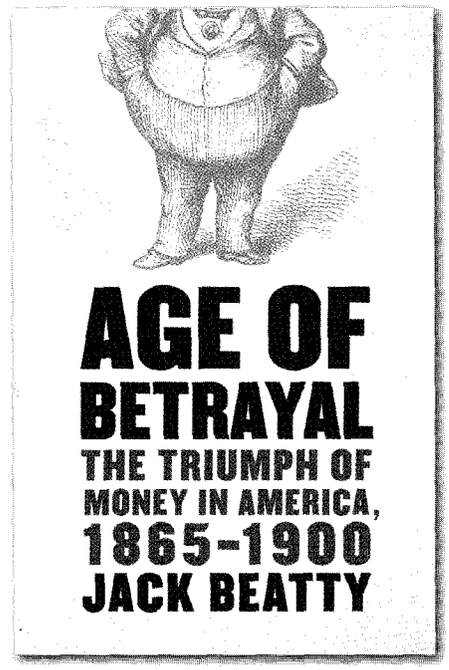
THE IGNOBLE YEARS

Jack Beatty examines the many uncomfortable parallels between the Gilded Age and our own.

By Alan Wolfe



Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865–1900

By Jack Beatty
Knopf, 496 pp.

The "betrayal" in the title of Jack Beatty's remarkable new book, *Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865–1900*, is the abandonment of black equality in favor of economic inequality. The era Beatty covers is an eventful one. It starts with the end of the Civil War—a war that represented a hideously brutal rending of the American social fabric, but one, alas, necessary to abolish slavery and hold out the offer of full citizenship for newly freed blacks—and ends in an orgy of corruption dominated by a powerful cabal of business leaders and supine politicians working in tandem to line their pockets with wealth while leaving those newly freed blacks in wretched poverty and without the right to vote once so promisingly held out to them.

Symbolic of the hopes with which the era began was the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed that no person would be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. In so doing, the amendment established a constitutional basis for the idea of equality that had played such a prominent role in the Declaration of Independence. (By turning a blind eye to slavery, the original Constitution had never made that promise.) For the first time in American history, all persons born or naturalized in the United States would be treated as full citizens of the society in which they lived.

But because the era ended with the solidification of a plutocracy, that promise remained unfulfilled. Think about it this way: Unprecedented numbers of America's youth gave up their lives in the belief that the Civil War was about the elimination of slavery. A similar number of black Americans were convinced that, however extensive the bloodshed, the North's victory would open the door to their advancement. And then all of it—the broken families, the hospitalized victims, the burned cities and towns, the heroism, and, of course, the dead—went unredeemed because a few brilliant lawyers invented a new jurisprudence, more than a few rapacious businessmen saw unlimited opportunities for profit, and the leaders of both of America's political parties did not mind setting a historical record for mediocrity so long as their cautious conservatism allowed the plunder of favorable government contracts and the repression of worker's rights to continue. To complete the scandal, the American public sat back and watched it all, allowing the red flag of race to distract them on those rare occasions when they understood that something unseemly was happening to their country. The entire period constitutes five decades of perverted priorities, brought to life in this book by the author's political passion and narrative power.

Beatty's method is eclectic. He doesn't follow a straight-line chronological path so much as dwell on telling moments to extract their significance and meaning. But although he seems at times to meander—the book begins with a discussion of how American railroad magnates standardized time across the United States to make the business of organizing travel more predictable, and then moves on to describe how the city of Chicago rose so rapidly from the midwestern plains—there is a grand theme unifying the stories he tells. Abe Lincoln rose to power on the basis of the idea of free

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labor; slavery was wrong because it prevented workers from gaining the rightful rewards from their efforts, and, for the same reason, workers ought to be able, by the dint of their labor, to end their dependency on others by rising up through the ranks to middle-class status. Emancipation and the Homestead Act represented the crowning achievements of Lincoln's Republicanism. Both would be abandoned by the political party that Lincoln helped to establish.

During the Gilded Age, rights were granted to those who needed them the least while denied to those who needed them most. The side that lost the war won the peace.

To chart how this took place, Beatty takes the reader on a long, and worthwhile, tour of American jurisprudence. It begins in New Orleans in 1869 with a man named John A. Campbell. The city's filthy and unsafe slaughterhouses had been the subject of extensive negative publicity in the papers. In response, the city passed what it called "An Act to Protect the Health of the City of New Orleans and to Locate the Stock Landings and Slaughter Houses." The act gave a private company the right to rent space to the city's butchers, who had previously been scattered throughout the city and, completely unregulated, had practiced their trade with little regard for the public's health.

The displaced butchers sued. Campbell, an embittered former Confederate who had once served on the U.S. Supreme Court (and wrote a concurring opinion in *Dred Scott*, the infamous decision that treated slaves as property rather than as citizens), rallied to their defense. One might think that a Southern conservative would have attacked the Civil War amendments for their ringing defense of equality. But Campbell had a better idea. Weren't the butchers being enslaved because they were forbidden to practice their livelihood as they best saw it, he wondered? If no person shall be deprived of their rights without due process of law, weren't those same butchers the subject of unequal treatment? Campbell embraced the Fourteenth Amendment in order to crush it. Once businessmen could claim that economic regulation deprived them of their property without due process of law, the result would be the perpetuation of economic inequality rather than the promised equality between the races.

Campbell also played an important role in the development of substantive due process: the idea that the courts could judge a legislative act not only on the basis of whether it met the test of fair procedure (such as treating everyone equally), but also whether its *substance* was worthy of judicial approval. Since the Constitution itself is mostly about procedures, to judge on substance means to compare a particular law to some extra-constitutional standard which the Constitution is then stretched to embody. Conservatives of the period had no doubt what such a standard should be. The right to own private property, and to dispose of it as one sees fit, they believed, is inherent in nature and endowed by God. "Things regulate themselves ... which means, of course, that God regulates them," the economist Francis Bowen argued. If that was true, then all social legislation could be held unconstitutional on substantive grounds; Bowen's Harvard colleague, J. Laurence Laughlin, objected to the very use of the word *social*, as if there were no such thing as a common good capable of trumping the economic rights of those who owned property.

Once substantive due process entered into judicial reasoning, it was only a matter of time before corporations came to be considered persons and thus brought under the protection of the Fourteenth Amendment. The way this occurred forms one of Beatty's most fascinating vignettes. This revolutionary doctrine, it turns out, owes its construction not to any elected politician, nor even to any judge who, however protected from public scrutiny by life tenure, was at least originally appointed by a president elected by the people. The culprit was a Supreme Court reporter named John Chandler Davis. The court reporter summarizes legal opinions in the form of headnotes. In one such headnote, *Santa Clara County v. South Pacific Railroad Co.*, which dealt with the issue of whether the state of California could tax property owned by the railroads, Davis summarily proclaimed the new doctrine: corporations can be treated as persons under the terms of the Fourteenth Amendment. "Thus without argument or opinion on the point," Justice William O. Douglas would write much later, "the *Santa Clara* case becomes one of the most momentous of all our decisions ... Corporations are now armed with constitutional prerogatives."

Beatty has many more stories to tell. He devotes a chapter to the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and to the militant anti-union tactics of the Pennsylvania Railroad's third vice president, Alexander Cassatt, brother of the famous Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt. He describes the emergence of the Populist revolt, the first serious attempt by ordinary Americans to put a stop to the plunder. Considerable attention is paid to various tactics of ballot box manipulation. He also details the more egregious double standards of the Supreme Court, which held that the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (the first-ever federal law that attempted to limit the power of monopolies) did not apply to a company that controlled 98 percent of the sugar industry but did to the labor union led by Eugene V. Debs. Politics and business from the end of the Civil War until Theodore Roosevelt's ascension to the presidency offer an especially capacious gallery of rogues, and Beatty has little trouble filling his pages with one outrage after another.

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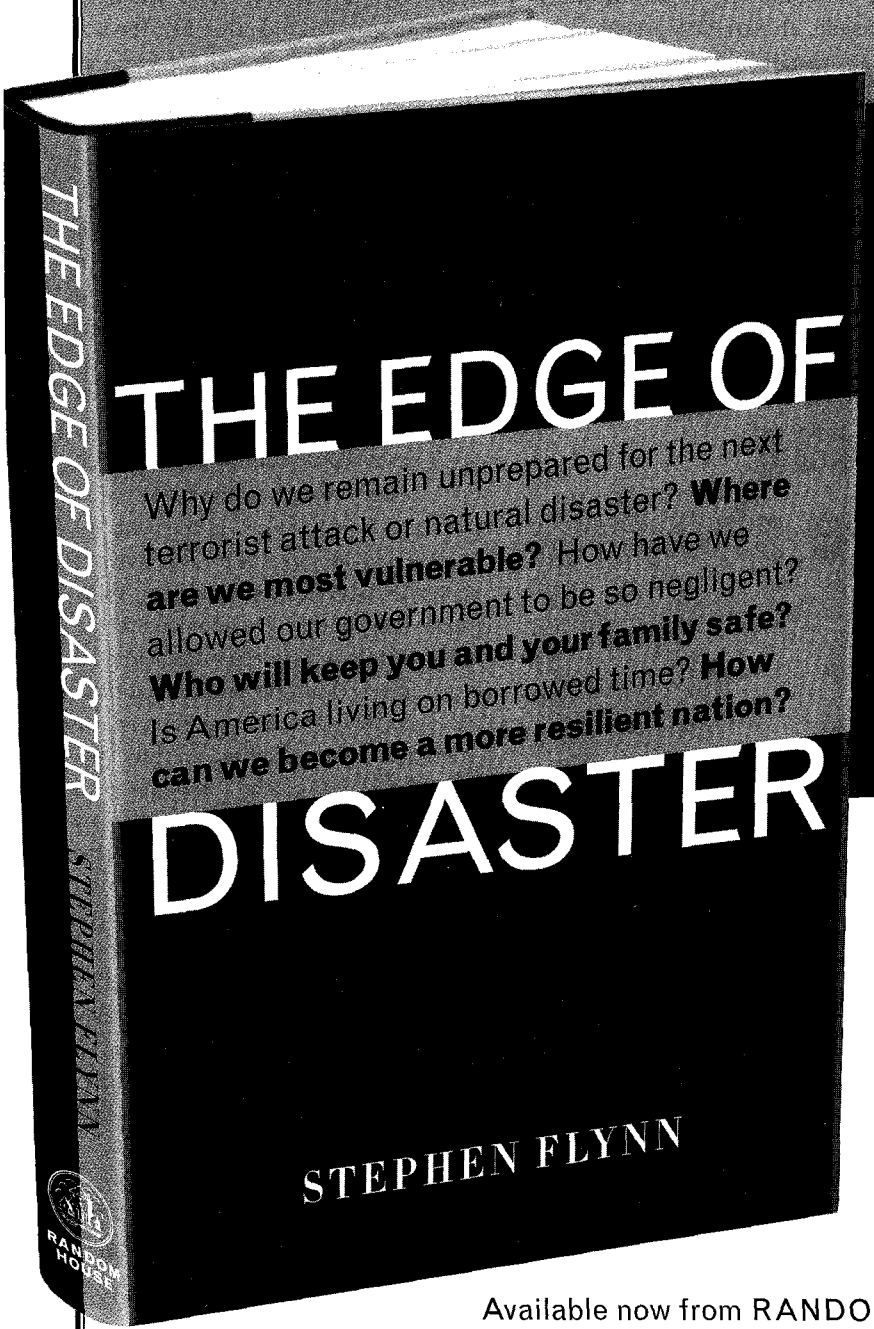
ACTS OF TERROR
cannot always be prevented.

MOTHER NATURE
cannot always be predicted.

BUT AMERICA
can always be prepared.



Acclaimed homeland security expert Stephen Flynn incisively assesses America's strategic vulnerability to catastrophic events and offers a sobering critique of the gambles that elected officials and corporate leaders have been recklessly making, how these gambles invite danger, and what we can do to stop them.

"This book is a must-read for all members of Congress, 2008 presidential candidates, and ordinary citizens who want to build a better and safer future."

—ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER,
dean, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

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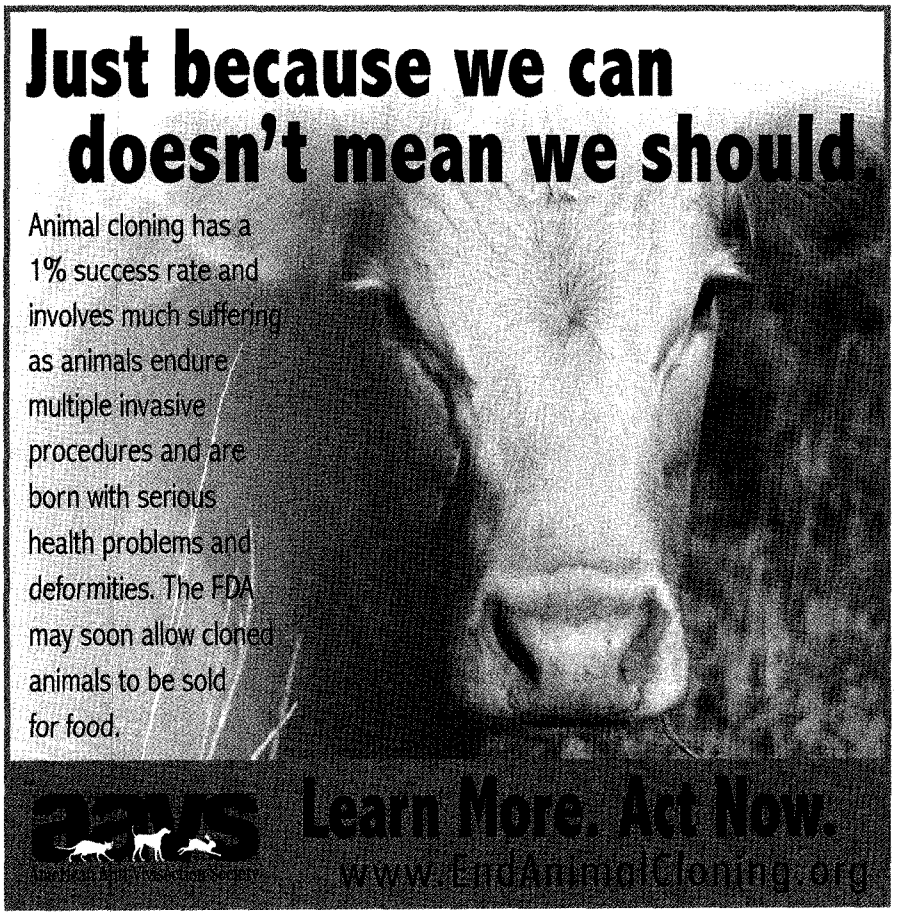
Not holding an academic position in a history department, Beatty is free to bring out the comparison between that time and our own, and he does so with gusto. The idea that corporations can be considered persons underlies the Supreme Court's more contemporary review that stringent forms of campaign finance reform violate freedom of speech. The ability of private companies to avoid economic regulation foreshadows the decimation of the regulatory state under George W. Bush. Andrew Carnegie won contracts during the Spanish-American War not unlike those procured by Halliburton during the Iraq War. This is not to suggest that politics today is more shameful than it was then; it would be hard to top the Gilded Age in sheer unfairness. But there is one episode which suggests that we have more to account for than our Gilded Age brethren. "I know that to threaten war for political reasons is a crime," Senator Henry Cabot Lodge wrote to TR, before adding: "But to sacrifice a great party and bring free silver upon the country ... is hardly less odious." No current Republican of Lodge's stature has acknowledged that if it was a crime to pursue war for political reasons then, it remains one today.

In the end, though, Beatty rejects the notion of a perfect analogy between those times and our own. The reason has everything to do with race. Even if Americans had wanted to reject the politics of the Gilded Age, the party system that controlled it would have made the task close to impossible. The era was premised on a Faustian bargain between the parties. "In the Gilded Age it was easier to credit the virgin birth than that government could serve the general welfare," says Beatty with disdain. "Republican government serviced business. The Democrats wanted a weak federal government so that the southern oligarchy could maintain the institutions—lynching, convict-labor, fraudulent elections, disenfranchisement, racial apartheid—that alone gave it popular legitimacy." This was the post–Civil War compromise: Republicans would weaken government to serve the upper class rather than the middle class, while the Democrats would accept Republican rule to protect their privileges in the South.

The end result was that in order to protect whites against blacks, American democracy was turned upside down. Rights were granted to those who needed them the least while denied to those who needed them most. The side that lost the war won the peace. Judges declared national law superior to state law when it served business, but then declared state law superior to national law when *that* served business. A war fought to enable blacks in the South to vote resulted in whites in the North being effectively disenfranchised. Lincoln Steffens once wrote about the shame of the city; this was the shame of the country.

One of the most interesting questions one can ask about a society is how it deals with its own shame. One answer is that it ought never to forget in the future what its citizens tried to ignore in the past. We owe much to Jack Beatty for this moving, angry, and righteously just account of this ignoble half century. It is obvious to the reader, just as it is to the author, that if we are ever to deal with the shame of the Bush years, we need to understand an earlier era in which a disputed election was resolved in favor of the candidate with the smaller popular vote, ballot fraud was ubiquitous, class differences were as exacerbated as they were ignored, legislation and legislators were bought lock, stock, and barrel, and preemptive war was declared under dubious pretenses. If they got away with it once, Beatty implies, they can get away with it again. *The Age of Betrayal* is about nothing less than whether democracy is something Americans care enough about to keep. WM

Alan Wolfe teaches political science at Boston College and is writing a book on why liberalism matters.



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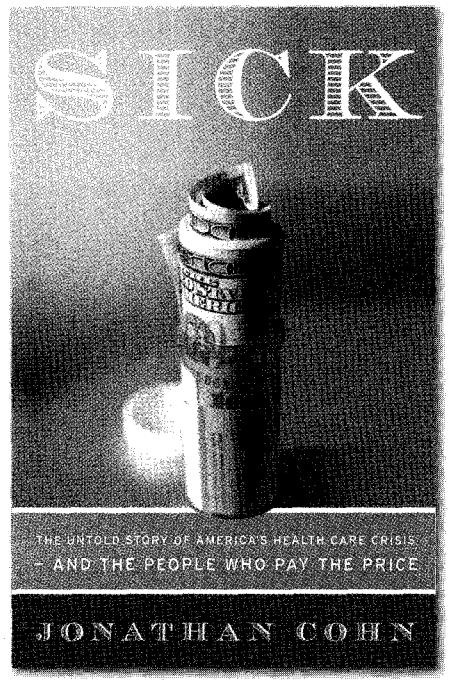
MISDIAGNOSED

Why all the money in the world won't fix what's wrong with America's health care system

By Phillip Longman



Sick: The Untold Story of America's Health Care Crisis—and the People Who Pay the Price

By Jonathan Cohn
HarperCollins, 320 pp.

In his new book, *Sick: The Untold Story of America's Health Care Crisis—and the People Who Pay the Price*, Jonathan Cohn, a senior editor at the *New Republic*, offers a series of chilling anecdotes about ordinary Americans who lack affordable medical care. There's the mother of three who, after her husband loses his high-tech job and family health benefits, puts off seeing a doctor and winds up dying of breast cancer. There's the security guard in Los Angeles who can't afford treatment for his diabetes and winds up partially losing his vision. There's the impecunious former nun hounded by bill collectors from a Catholic "charity" hospital. In all, Cohn fills eight chapters with similar tales of desperation, along the way pausing to provide policy analysis and historical background—all in an attempt to explain the larger forces at work in America's health care crisis.

Cohn tells his stories with compassion and rich detail, vividly demonstrating how the cost of health care threatens not only the finances of ordinary Americans but, quite literally, their very survival. For those who want to know how Medicare, Medicaid, managed care, or medical savings accounts came to be, Cohn provides an easy-to-read primer. Though generally critical of market forces in medicine, Cohn is completely fair. He describes why it is actuarial logic, and not necessarily greed, that compels insurance companies to discriminate against people with preexisting conditions or to charge the old more than the young. Cohn doesn't demonize corporate medicine; instead, he dispassionately describes its limited ability, particularly in an era of vicious price competition, to pursue a social ethos while at the same time earning a return on capital.

Cohn's book comes at a time when health care is once again rising to the top of the political agenda. Stung by the ever-rising cost of employer-provided health care, big business is at last beginning to put its weight behind health care reform. Wal-Mart's CEO, Lee Scott, is now on record favoring universal coverage. In January, America's Health Insurance Plans, a trade group of large insurers, rolled out a ten-year, $300 billion proposal to provide health insurance for all children and 95 percent of adults. Perhaps more important politically, the majority of Americans who have health insurance increasingly worry that they'll lose it—even as they resent having to pay an ever-rising share of its cost. All of the Democratic presidential candidates are vowing to achieve universal health care if elected. Some have very detailed plans. But unfortunately, the debate over health care continues to be poorly framed, and Cohn's book, for all its virtues, is another example of that problem.

Like most critics of the medical care system in this country, Cohn begins from the premise that the fundamental problem with American health care—widely held to be the best in the world—is financial in nature: the system costs too much, and leaves too many people uninsured. But that is a flawed premise.

As a group, uninsured patients like those Cohn chronicles in his book face real hardships. But when they *do* receive medical care—in emergency rooms, free clinics, community hospitals, and the like—they receive care that is as high or of higher quality as that of the insured.

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Yes, you read that right. According to a recent RAND study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, uninsured patients receive only 53.7 percent of the care experts believe they should get—that is, appropriate, evidence-based treatment. But according to the same study, patients with private, fee-for-service insurance are even *less likely* to receive the proper care. Indeed, among Americans receiving acute care, those who *lack* insurance stand a slightly better chance of receiving proper treatment than patients covered by Medicaid, Medicare, or any form of private insurance.

Survival rates for heart attack victims are actually higher in low-spending hospitals than in high-spending hospitals.

How can this be? To answer that question, you need to understand what the insured are actually getting for their health care dollars. One answer: there's a lot of unnecessary treatment. Dr. Elliot S. Fisher, a Dartmouth Medical School researcher, estimates that 30 percent of all Medicare spending goes for unnecessary operations and procedures. For instance, under Medicare, the per capita cost of treating terminally ill patients in Miami is $50,000 more than the per capita cost of treating equally old terminal patients in Minneapolis, yet the patients in Miami don't live any longer. The explanation is simply that Miami's high concentration of specialists and hospitals is overtreating the city's patients.

To put a more human face on it, think of dying patients hooked up on ventilators, dialysis machines, and feeding tubes as an endless procession of specialists come and go, profiting from those patients' prolonged and sometimes agonizing deaths. Some patients feebly resist these heroic treatments while their families insist on heeding Dr. So-and-So's promises of a miracle cure. Other patients keep shopping for specialists until they find one willing to perform one last unnecessary surgery, such as a lung transplant for an eighty-five-year-old man already dying of liver failure. Yet whatever the dynamic among doctors, patients, and family, Fisher and others have shown that the presence of large numbers of specialists increases the chances of overtreatment with no measurable improvement in life expectancy or public health.

Another huge problem with prestigious institutions catering to the fully insured is their general lack of sensible preventative and follow-up care: for example, you might hope that after your high-priced cardiologist performs an unnecessary surgery he will at least follow up by letting you know the benefits of taking aspirin as a way of managing heart disease. Research has shown that for patients with stable angina (occasional chest pain and constriction arising from chronic heart disease), for example, taking a daily low dose of aspirin reduces the chances of adverse cardiovascular events by 33 percent. But Fisher found that in America's highest-spending hospitals, only 74.8 percent of heart attack victims receive aspirin upon discharge from the hospital, as opposed to 83.5 percent in lower-budget competitors. This may be one reason why survival rates for heart attack victims are actually *higher* in low-spending hospitals than in high-spending hospitals.

What's more, these spendthrift hospitals often skip other routine preventative care such as flu vaccines, Pap smears, and mammograms. This general lack of attention to prevention and follow-up care in high-spending hospitals helps to explain why not only heart attack victims but also patients suffering from colon cancer and hip fractures stand a better chance of living longer if they stay away from "elite" hospitals and choose a lower-cost provider instead. Given this reality, it is perhaps not surprising that patient satisfaction also declines as a hospital's spending per patient rises.

What explains these findings? Remember first what American doctors and hospitals get paid to do. Outside the Veterans Administration and a few staff-model HMOs, they don't get paid to keep and make patients well. They get paid to provide treatments—and that's a big difference. It means that most American doctors and hospitals have no economic interest in your long-term well-being, while they also have an enormous economic incentive to perform operations and procedures for which Medicare and private insurance pay well. The result is a systematic bias toward the overtreatment of patients—and particularly of those who are well insured—and a simultaneous neglect of prevention and well-being.

The effects of these skewed incentives are particularly bad at hospitals in which patients see lots of different specialists. Not only does the presence of each additional specialist increase a patient's chances of overtreatment by that specialist, it also increases the chances of the patient's being harmed by a lack of coordination or effective disease management. Each specialist is responsible for this or that body organ, and nobody is in charge of the whole patient, much less for the overall quality of care.

The problem of poor coordination could easily be rectified by a greater use of electronic medical records. But again, outside the VA and a few very large HMOs that enjoy long-term relationships with their patients, no business case exists for making the necessary investment in information technology. Precisely to the extent that such an investment succeeds in improving patient outcomes, it also reduces providers' revenue. As the health care economist J. D. Kleinke has observed, this is the dirtiest of American medicine's many dirty secrets: "Bad quality is good for business. And the surest road to bad quality is bad or no information."

In addition to overtreatment and undertreatment, there is also flat-out mistreatment. Consider the following statistics: The Institute of Medicine estimates that lack of health insurance among people aged twenty-five to sixty-four causes

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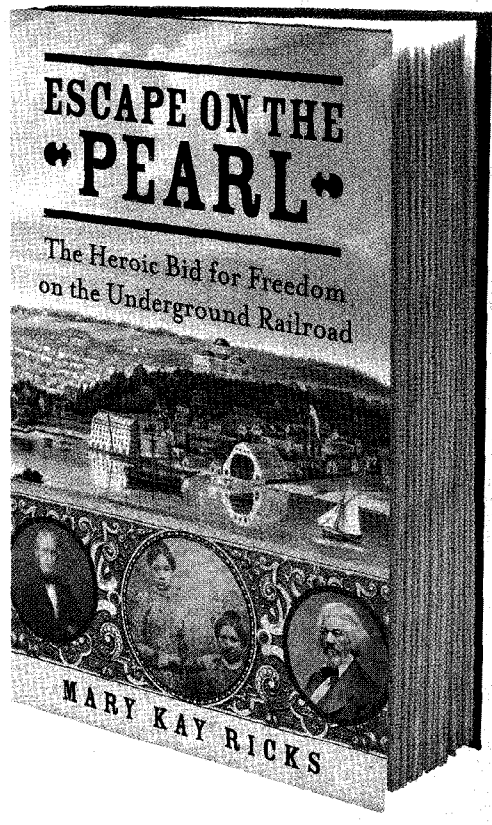
18,000 premature deaths annually, which is appalling. But the Institute of Medicine also estimates that up to 98,000 Americans are killed in hospitals every year by medical errors. In 2006, the IOM issued a new study that found that hospital patients in the United States experience an average of at least one medication error, such as receiving the wrong drug or the wrong dosage, every day they stay in the hospital.

All told, according to the RAND study, Americans receive appropriate care from their doctors only about half of the time, and the results are deadly. In addition to the 98,000 killed by medical errors, another 126,000 die from their doctor's failure to observe evidence-based protocols for just four common conditions: hypertension, heart attacks, pneumonia, and colorectal cancer.

American medicine is not only mismanaged in practice, it's also stunningly uninformed by basic scientific evidence about which treatments work better than others and about which in fact do harm. For example, Cohn opens his book with a story about a woman who dies of a heart attack purportedly because she did not receive a cardiac catheterization, a procedure in which a cardiologist inserts a balloon into a patient's circulatory system and then expands it in order to open a partially blocked vessel. The moral of the Cohn's story is unclear to me, but Cohn seems to believe that if more patients had access to cardiac catheterization this would reduce the rate of heart attacks. Yet a study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* last year revealed that while the elective use of such procedures has been skyrocketing over the last ten to fifteen years, there has been no change in the rate of heart attacks. Since Cohn's book went to press, a new blockbuster study sponsored by the VA and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* has similarly found that the specific use of angioplasties (the opening of a blocked blood vessel using a thin tube with a balloon or another device on the end) and stents (the tubes that prop open a blood vessel) is no better at preventing heart attacks than nonsurgical therapeutic treatments, such as taking aspirin or cholesterol-reducing drugs.

Indeed, the current understanding of what causes heart attacks calls into question why these procedures even *could* prevent one. As David Waters, chief of cardiology at San Francisco General Hospital and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, points out, most heart attacks are not caused by narrowed arteries, as the old "clogged pump" model used to suggest. Instead they are caused when plaque, a deposit of fatty material in an artery, breaks off and forms a clot that abruptly stops blood flow to the heart. At that point—but not before—catheterization becomes appropriate. Underscoring the dangers involved in this form of overtreatment, about 1 in 100

A TALE OF COURAGE AND TRIUMPH



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people undergoing a catheterization procedure for diagnostic purposes die during it or while in postoperative care.

Cohn also tells the sad tale of a hard-working, loving husband suffering from heart disease, diabetes, and other ailments who purportedly died because of cutbacks in Tennessee's Medicaid program. The cutbacks, Cohn tells us, forced the man to give up some of the "state-of-the-art prescription drugs [that] had not only kept him going but also alleviated his suffering." Specifically, he "was supposed to be taking more than two dozen separate medications, the majority of them prescriptions. They were enough to fill a Jack Daniels whisky glass every morning, afternoon, and evening."

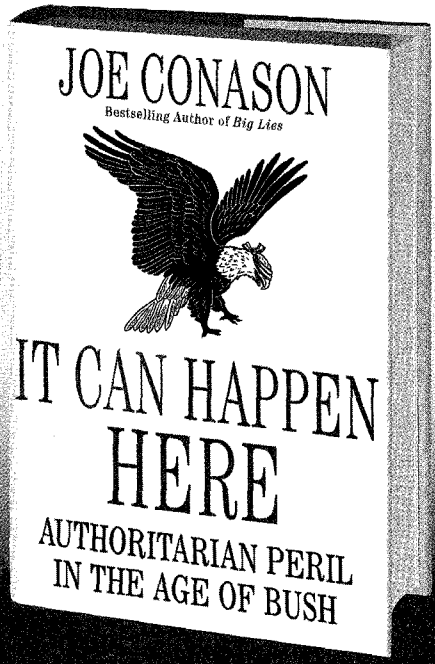
I don't know what those two dozen drugs were, nor how many different doctors may have prescribed them without each other's knowledge. But on its face this story certainly suggests that the man may well have been among the 1.4 million Americans injured every year by harmful drug combinations and other medication errors. And then, too, there is the not unlikely possibility that the pile of pills in his whisky glass included the then-state-of-the-art anti-inflammatory drug Vioxx, which, according the Food and Drug Administration, has sent more Americans to the grave than were killed during the entire Vietnam War.

Here is another example of how the current debate over health care reform is misframed: to most of us, including Cohn, it seems self-evident that the lives of the uninsured would be improved if they had access to CAT scans, MRIs, and other high-tech imaging devices found in America's "best hospitals"—and in some cases they would. But as health policy writer Shannon Brownlee shows in a forthcoming book, *Overtreated: Why Too Much Medicine Is Making Americans Sicker and Poorer*, autopsy studies consistently demonstrate that doctors are only slightly less likely to make misdiagnoses today than they were in the 1930s—long before the invention of MRIs and CAT scans. It's not just that these imaging devices too often produce false negatives; it's also that they often produce false positives, which lead to unnecessary and often dangerous treatment. Thanks to high-tech imaging, America is now experiencing an epidemic of "pseudo-disease," as doctors submit patients to debilitating surgery and chemotherapy for tumors so small and slow growing that they present no danger of causing death or even any symptoms.

And despite what you may have heard on *Oprah* or the *Today Show*, there are also no studies demonstrating the value of the latest fad in imaging technology, Cardiac Computed Tomography Angiography, or CTAs. These machines expose patients to up to 400 times the radiation dose of one chest X-ray, according to a recent article in *Health Affairs*, but no one can show what benefit they offer—ex-

AUTHORITARIANISM IN THIS DAY AND AGE?

In this compelling, impassioned, yet rational and fact-based look at the state of the nation, Conason shows how and why America has been wrenched from its founding principles and is being dragged toward an authoritarian, theocratic state.



IT CAN HAPPEN HERE

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cept money-making potential for entrepreneurial health care providers and doctors practicing defensive medicine. Experts who study the health care outcomes across populations consider no technology as notorious for its overuse and lack of cost-effectiveness as imaging.

Cohn's book will show you—in heart-wrenching detail—how under our current system of private insurance too many people can't get the coverage they need at a reasonable price. I applaud him for his hard work and skill. But is this the disease that afflicts the U.S. health care system, or just one of its more awful and unacceptable symptoms? Cohn seems to think it's the disease, and prescribes as a cure making everyone eligible for Medicare. But the majority of researchers who study the actual processes and outcomes of American medicine think the lack of affordable insurance is but a symptom of the larger ailment. Treating symptoms often makes sense, and we should treat this one. But that doesn't get us to a cure.

The key to the cure is understanding that there is more than enough money already sloshing around the health care system to ensure every American access to quality care. Unfortunately, the current practice of American medicine, whether financed by Medicare, insurance companies, or other sources, is stunningly inefficient, unsafe, unscientific, and getting worse. And that's why it costs so bloody much.

Americans spend more per person on health care than residents of any other country, and they have very little to show for it except more medical bills and too many ineffective, and even harmful, treatments. Americans, for example, pay twice as much per person as Britons for health care. Yet even though the British are more prone to drink heavily and are just as likely to smoke as Americans are, they live longer and are far healthier.

This is true even among privileged members of both nations. For example, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2006 found that the prevalence of diabetes among American college graduates aged fifty-five to sixty-four is 9.5 percent, compared with 6.1 percent among British college graduates of the same age. Even after one controls for the fact that Americans of all classes are more prone to obesity, the disparity remains, with Americans of all classes more likely than their counterparts in Great Britain to suffer from diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

Similar health disparities exist between Americans and the citizens of all other advanced nations. Why? You don't have to travel to some far-off foreign country like Sweden, or even to Canada, to find the answer. Nor do you have to rely on mere econometric speculations. The cure to America's health care crisis is a system that's already up and running right here in the United States, with facilities in every state, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. It is, in fact, the largest integrated health care system in the United States, and it points the way to the future.

Most of its doctors have faculty appointments with academic hospitals—over the years, two have won the Nobel Prize for medicine. The system's innovations have included the development of the first artificial kidney, the cardiac pacemaker, the first successful liver transplant, and the nicotine patch, plus many advanced prosthetic devices, including hydraulic knees and robotic arms.

More impressively, health care quality experts also hail it for its exceptional safety record, its use of evidence-based medicine, its health-promotion and wellness programs, and its unparalleled adoption of electronic medical records and other information technologies. Finally, and most astoundingly, it's the only health care provider in the United States whose cost per patient has been holding steady in recent years, even as its quality performance is making it the benchmark of the entire health care sector.

Though comparatively few Americans, especially among coastal elites, have any contact with this system these days, and even fewer qualify for its services, its example shows that it is possible to make vast improvements in the quality, safety, and effectiveness of the health care all Americans receive, and to do so for a fraction of what an unreformed health care system would cost.

I'm talking about the Veterans Administration, which over the course of the last decade or so has undergone a remarkable transformation. Even with its problems, the VA's model of care turns out, in study after study, to be the best the American health care system has to offer. As Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government gushed, in awarding the VA a top prize in 2006 for innovation in government: "While the costs of health care continue to soar for most Americans, the VA is reducing costs, reducing errors, and becoming the model for what modern health care management and delivery should look like."

Among Americans receiving acute care, those who lack insurance stand a slightly better chance of receiving proper treatment than those covered by Medicaid, Medicare, or any form of private insurance.

This is another inconvenient fact absent from the health care debate. What can you say about it? The VA is an example of the government *running* a health care system, not just writing checks to cover other people's medical bills, which is all that Medicare does. The VA also has a near-lifetime relationship with its patients and therefore has an incentive to invest in prevention, disease management, and protocols of care that demonstrably work—incentives that are weak or absent throughout the rest of Amer-

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ica's fragmented health care system. Medicare for everyone, or some similar scheme for universal coverage, just doesn't address the root cause of America's health care crisis, which is poor-quality, uncoordinated care. The VA model of health care does.

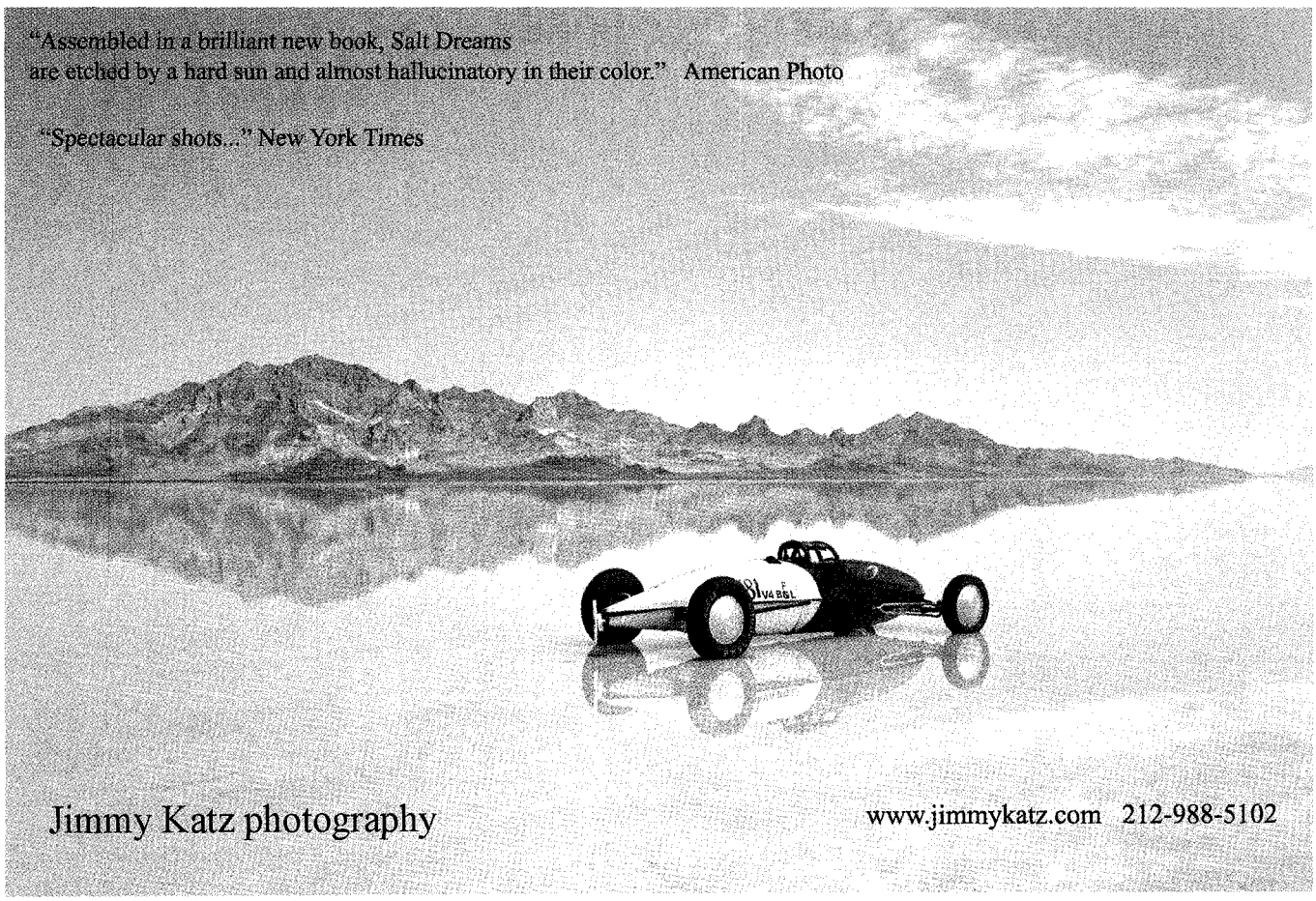
Yes, I know there was a scandal at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. But Walter Reed is an Army facility and not part of the Veterans Administration system. Yes, I know there is an emerging consensus that the Bush administration and the Republican Congress did not provide the VA with enough money to cope with some forms of care needed by some returning veterans—notably mental health services. But this problem, like most of the others at the VA, have to do with access, not with the quality of care received by those who get in.

Upon hearing some anecdote about the VA, we should always ask, "Compared to what?" As a system, the VA outperforms the rest of the health care sector by every conceivable metric, including wait times and, of course, protection from catastrophic medical bills. And it is more cost-effective: for every patient who switched from Medicare to the VA, the taxpayers would save about one-half to two-thirds in medical costs, while the patients themselves would receive demonstrably higher-quality care. Step one on the road to true health reform should be to allow all veterans on Medicare to use their entitlement for VA care, and then gradually expand access to the VA model of care for all Americans.

Adopting the VA model, with its salaried doctors and its extensive use of electronic information technology and evidence-based medicine, would cure the American health care crisis. Throwing more money into the current, fragmented, profit-driven system without changing the actual practice of American medicine might ease the problems of the uninsured temporarily, but would also give us more inappropriate, sometimes dangerous, and ever-more-expensive care.

It's important to remind Americans, as Cohn does admirably, that our current method of financing health care puts them at grave and growing financial and medical risk if they lack insurance. But what is ultimately the greatest threat to the public's purse and the public's health, while also ultimately the best argument for a universal, government-controlled health care system, isn't the problem of the uninsured. It's the problem of every American who wants to stay or get well.WM

Phillip Longman, a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation, is author of *Best Care Anywhere: Why VA Health Care Is Better Than Yours*, published in April by Polipont Press.



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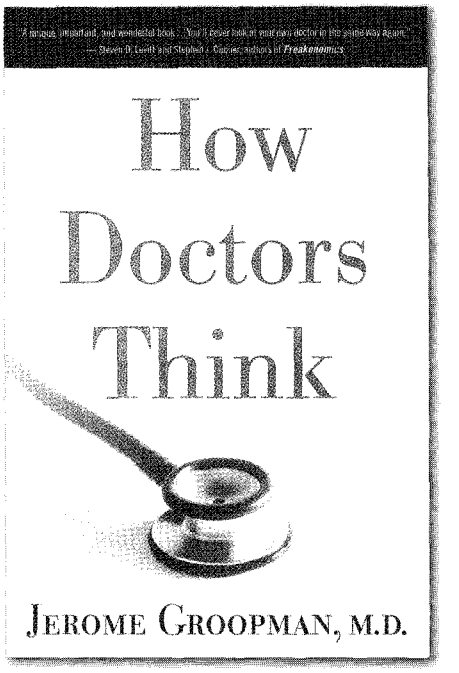
SHOT IN THE DARK

Why doctors know less than you think

By Shannon Brownlee



How Doctors Think

By Jerome Groopman
Houghton Mifflin, 320 pp.

When Anne Dodge was twenty years old, food suddenly stopped agreeing with her. She would get hungry, she would eat, then a feeling like something gripping her stomach would come over her, and she would retreat to the bathroom to vomit. Suspecting a mental disorder, her primary-care physician referred her to a psychiatrist, who diagnosed anorexia nervosa with bulimia. But despite weekly therapy sessions, Anne continued to lose weight.

As her health deteriorated, she consulted more and more specialists: hematologists because her red blood cell count was perilously low; nutritionists because she was malnourished; orthopedists when she developed osteoporosis. When she began suffering from bouts of constipation alternating with diarrhea, various gastroenterologists diagnosed irritable bowel syndrome, a disease of unknown etiology and even more uncertain treatment. By the time Dodge was thirty years old, she had seen at least two dozen different specialists. She was put on a 3,000-calorie-a-day diet that consisted of mostly bread and pasta, which she swore she was forcing down, yet her doctors suspected she was lying as she continued to lose weight. By December 2004, Dodge was down to eighty-two pounds and deeply despondent about her condition. At her boyfriend's insistence, she drove into Boston shortly after Christmas Day for a consultation with yet another specialist.

This specialist was different. Before performing a physical exam, Dr. Myron Falchuk, a gastroenterologist at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, asked Dodge to do something no other physician had requested. "Let's go back to the beginning," he said. "Tell me about when you first didn't feel good." The longer Falchuk observed Anne Dodge, writes Jerome Groopman, "the more he listened to her, the more disquiet he felt." Everyone else had written her off as some neurotic, a mental case who not only wasn't eating enough but lied about it, yet Falchuk's intuition told him the picture didn't fit. And once he felt that way, he told Groopman, "I began to wonder: What was missing?" As it turned out, Dodge did not have anorexia nervosa, or bulimia, or irritable bowel syndrome. In asking this young woman simply to recount her story, Falchuk was able to come to the diagnosis that had eluded the specialists who came before him. He was able to restore her to health.

In telling Falchuk's tale, and those of other difficult-to-diagnose cases, Groopman offers a riveting view of the intricate and not always logical thought processes that lie behind the decisions that doctors make. On average, a doctor interrupts a patient who is describing her symptoms within about twelve seconds. By then, many doctors have decided upon a diagnosis and treatment. Often they're right, and the ability to "shoot from the hip" is much admired in medical circles, especially in high-pressure specialties like emergency medicine and radiology. But Groopman, who is himself a physician as well as an accomplished writer, is more interested in cases when doctors get it wrong. In *How Doctors Think,* he uses a series of case histories and interviews with physicians and patients to explore the nature of diagnostic error, and to come up with suggestions for how both doctors and patients can avoid it.

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Anne Dodge's various physicians, for instance, had fallen prey to a "framing" error; as soon as the first physician labeled her with anorexia, each subsequent doctor viewed her various symptoms within that framework, and looked no further for an alternate diagnosis—at least not until she met Falchuk. Attribution error was behind an emergency physician's failure to diagnose unstable angina in a forest ranger in his forties. Unstable angina provokes a crescendo of chest pain that often presages a heart attack, but in this case, the patient appeared far too fit and trim to be suffering from heart disease. After performing several tests that seemed to rule out angina, the doctor concluded that the shooting pain in his patient's chest was nothing more serious than a pulled muscle, and he sent the man home. Such mistakes are called attribution errors because doctors attribute the symptoms they see to the wrong diagnosis. The doctor only learned of his mistake when the patient was admitted to his emergency room the next day, in the midst of a full-blown heart attack. Then there's the type of error that results from confirmation bias, a kind of "cognitive cherry-picking," as Groopman puts it, the tendency to see only the symptoms and test results that support the presumed diagnosis.

Though medicine has wrapped itself in the mantle of science, most doctors aren't trained to think very scientifically ...

With this multitude of ways to be led astray, how on earth do doctors ever manage to come up with the right diagnosis? They are most likely to do so, in Groopman's view, by maintaining a sense of humility in the face of the deep and abiding uncertainty of medicine. For all of modern medicine's high-tech gadgetry and sophisticated tests, doctors are still limited by their lack of knowledge about the body and all of its various ailments. The causes of many kinds of cancer, for example, remain an enigma, as does heart disease in a patient like the forest ranger, who was young and fit. Doctors only recently learned that the ailment afflicting Anne Dodge is remarkably widespread. Most of the time, they don't know the source of lower back pain—whether it's caused by strained muscles, a damaged disk, or a pinched nerve. On top of all of this, every human body is slightly different, and no two people respond in exactly the same way to the same drug or medical procedure. Doctors face a vast sea of unknowns, and Groopman's obvious compassion for this potentially unnerving state of uncertainty is evident in his stories. (Indeed, Groopman comes through so clearly in this book and his previous work, *The Anatomy of Hope*, as the kind of doctor we all wish we had. He's a cancer specialist who is at once intelligent, kind, intuitive, and profoundly comforting in the face of an often desperate illness.)

The other form of uncertainty in medicine is more pernicious. Many if not most of the treatments that medicine has to offer are not based on scientific evidence. Back surgeons, for example, have no idea if a commonly performed, potentially risky—and highly lucrative—surgical procedure called spinal fusion is actually any better at relieving lower back pain than nonsurgical remedies. Yet they keep doing spinal fusions, though many of their patients wind up no better than they were before the surgery—while some are left in worse shape. There's still no clear evidence which form of treatment for prostate cancer is most effective. Is minimally invasive hip replacement better than standard surgery? Does lung reduction surgery reduce the risk of dying from emphysema? Nobody knows, despite recent headlines, whether or not screening for lung cancer with CAT scans will save lives. The list of what we don't know about new as well as commonly performed procedures and widely prescribed drugs goes on and on.

The notion that modern medicine isn't grounded in science is probably hard for many readers to believe. We want to trust that our doctors know what they're doing, that our surgeon is certain that the painful, risky procedure we are about to undergo is likely to restore us to health, that our internist can point to solid scientific research showing that the drug she is about to prescribe will improve our symptoms. Yet as Groopman makes clear, a great deal of medical knowledge is based not on careful testing, but on supposition and belief. It's handed down, "as if from the heavens," as he pus it, during every young doctor's apprenticeship. Different physicians often treat the same condition in different ways, depending on where they were trained, or what they happened to hear from a respected authority in the field.

Yet all too often, physicians act as if there isn't a doubt in their minds about what ails a body, and what to do about it. Groopman recounts a conversation with a spine surgeon who told him he was a "believer" in spinal fusion. "My outcomes are better than anything in the published literature," the surgeon boasted. Yet when pressed, writes Groopman, the man confessed that he rarely followed up on patients over the long term; nor had he participated in any randomized controlled clinical trials—the gold standard of evidence-based medicine—to test whether or not spinal fusion is more effective than nonsurgical therapy. In many ways, this is the most surprising aspect of all when it comes to the question of how doctors think. Though medicine has wrapped itself in the mantle of science, most doc-

... especially when doing so is in conflict with their financial interests.

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tors aren't trained to think very scientifically—especially when doing so is in conflict with their financial interests.

The obvious remedy for the lacunae in medical evidence is more clinical research. Currently, the National Institutes of Health barely look at the efficacy of existing medical practices. The Food and Drug Administration generally requires only minimal testing of medical devices. And the industry-funded clinical drug trials the FDA does oversee generally compare new drugs to placebos, not to other similar drugs to see which ones work better. As I and others have written in these pages and elsewhere, the United States needs a federally funded institute, dedicated to research that will show what works in medicine, what doesn't, and for which patients.

Putting all of medicine on firmer scientific footing will require dozens of trials, and millions of dollars in funding. Until then, patients can help their doctors at least come to the right diagnosis, even if they don't always know what treatment is best. Near the end of *How Doctors Think,* Groopman tells the story of a man who consulted six different hand surgeons and received four different opinions about the source of a painful, debilitating problem with his right hand. The patient was Groopman himself, and his three-year odyssey in search of effective treatment is a testament to the importance of avoiding physicians who jump to conclusions, or ignore symptoms that don't happen to fit their predetermined notion of what's wrong. Read this eloquent little book to enjoy Groopman's fine storytelling, or to find out how he regained the use of his hand and what disease afflicted Anne Dodge. But read it especially if you want to learn how to encourage your own doctors to arrive at the right diagnosis. WM

Shannon Brownlee is a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a health care policy writer. Her new book, *Overtreated: Why Too Much Medicine Is Making Americans Sicker and Poorer,* will be published by Bloomsbury Press in 2007.

— The ending of bondage —

As the simple snowdrop breaks through the snow and heralds the coming spring, so do the people everywhere make known their demands for justice and peace, and an end to a long winter of thraldom and tyranny. The people's voice is rising, imperious to be heard. It is the harbinger of the new time, the new dispensation, struggling to be born.

Despite, nay, because of the plans and actions of dangerous men, the people are throwing off their ancient yoke and claiming their right to be heard. A new urgency and a new confidence invests their claim with power. The power of the people's voice breaks through the age-old bondage and points the way to the future. More and more, the people are realizing that the role of government is to dispense the needs of the people, that there is no problem or difficulty in which war is the only solution. The sour voices of power-hungry leaders may, for the moment, seduce the fearful or unwary, but their time is limited, is drawing to a close.

A better life

A new time is in the making — of justice, freedom and peace. In this coming time the peoples of all the nations will see fulfilled their dreams and hopes of a better life: of meaning and purpose, of beauty and understanding, of right relationship and love. Each day will bring a new discovery, inner and outer, each hour an opportunity to serve. Thus will it be, and thus will each man, woman and child glorify the divine in all of us, and show in all its variety the many-sided beauty of God.

Aspiration

When Maitreya emerges, he will seek to canalize the aspiration of countless millions who sense these truths but cannot give them voice. In him will they find a spokesman, eloquent and severe as circumstances require; through him will they find their needs made known, the needs of all for a just and peaceful world.

This process is already under way. At marches and demonstrations, where the people call for justice, peace and sanity, Maitreya may be found in one or other guise, playing the part of the people and speaking in their name. His energy of love pervades these gatherings of the just and inspires them to further effort. His strength becomes theirs and they feel undaunted and sure. In this way, the Lord of Love is turning the tide of hate, is potentizing the ardour of millions, and is finding that the people everywhere are aware of their destiny and are seeking the means to implement their heart-felt desires.

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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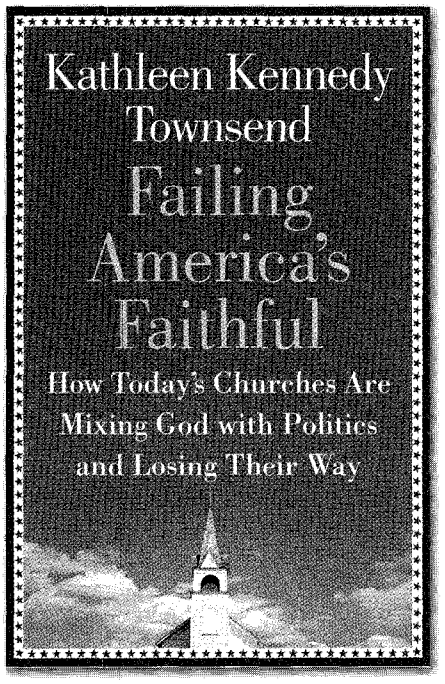
OF THEM MUCH IS EXPECTED



Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches Are Mixing God With Politics and Losing Their Way

By Kathleen Kennedy Townsend
Warner Books, 224 pp.

Many liberals fear mixing their religious convictions with their political ones. Not Kathleen Kennedy Townsend

By Kukula Kapoor Glastris

As Democrats continue their careful dance around the issue of religion's role in policy and politics, it's only fitting that a Kennedy should weigh in on the matter. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, formerly lieutenant governor of Maryland (and eldest child of Robert and Ethel Kennedy), in her new book, *Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches Are Mixing God With Politics and Losing Their Way*, reminds us that the Democrats weren't always so skittish on religion as they are today. The two most recent Democratic presidents, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, were (and are) devout Baptists who have always been unafraid to evoke their faith or use it as a guiding principle in their politics—much as Bobby Kennedy had always done. While John F. Kennedy was careful to put some distance between himself and the Roman Catholic Church during and after his run for the presidency, Bobby never did. Bobby's Catholicism was central to his mission in life, and it fueled his outrage at the injustices he saw. "My father walked his days with the suffering of the less fortunate on one shoulder and the Catholic teachings of social justice on the other," writes Townsend. "[W]e learned that to be religious was to be part of a community, and the purpose of our faith was to improve the world, [not just our own lives]." She recalls her father returning from trips to Mississippi and West Virginia—places in America where he saw children living in Third World conditions—shaken at what he had seen. "Families there live in a shack the size of this dining room," he said as the family ate together at a table set with linen and silver under a magnificent chandelier. "The children have distended stomachs and sores all over them because they don't have enough food. Do you know how lucky you are?" he asked. "Do something for our country," he implored, "give something back." It was an admonition the Kennedy children took to heart.

For Townsend as for her father, Catholicism has never been an abstraction. It has always been woven into every aspect of life. Bible reading and prayer was a twice-daily occurrence at home. All the children had the pictures of saints and containers for holy water in their rooms. Blessings were asked for everything from the consequential (Please, God, help Uncle Jack be the best president) to the mundane (Please, St. Anthony, help my mother find a parking spot at the movies). The nuns who taught Townsend in Catholic school had taught her mother, her aunts, and the mothers of her friends, and the emphasis on scholarship went hand in hand with a commitment to "fortitude, respect ... [and building] a strong community," notes Townsend. "The Church gave shape to our lives."

Thus it is not surprising that Townsend is exasperated with her fellow Democrats, who often seem to regard their religious convictions as something apart from their goals for the country. To her mind there is plenty of blame to go around for this alienation from faith. Mainline Protestant churches are shrinking as they fail to meet the spiritual needs of their parishioners. Toward the Catholic Church, Townsend is by turns

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despairing and angry. Despite the liberation that came in the wake of Vatican II, the Church has turned inward, remaining reactionary in its views regarding abortion, contraception, and the priesthood for women. "The Catholic Church of my youth dealt with issues at the core of the Gospel—suffering, injustice, sickness and poverty," she writes. Today, she says, the Church "has allowed its social agenda to be trumped by an all-consuming focus on contraception, abortion, same-sex marriage, and embryonic stem cell research—none of which are mentioned in the Gospels." And for her it was personal: when she ran for Congress as a pro-choice candidate in 1986, priests—including her own pastor—denounced her from the pulpit for her views. Her archdiocese blacklisted her from speaking at many public Catholic events, and at those where she did speak, she was often picketed and harassed.

Hard as she is on reactionary Catholics, Townsend is equally tough on conservative evangelicals, and for many of the same reasons. These evangelicals, she says witheringly, "have focused their attention on private matters—who has sex with whom, where, and how." She deplores what she calls the "privatization" of religion in many evangelical churches that stress a personal relationship with Jesus over a devotion to the teachings of the Gospel—alleviating suffering, injustice, sickness, and poverty. The religious right, in her view, has focused so completely on judgmental theology that they have forsaken the social-justice traditions of their own faith.

The left doesn't get off the hook either. Some leaders on the left, she says, "are [so] obsessed with keeping religion out of the public sphere, demanding a perfect purging of faith from public life far beyond what our Founding Fathers meant by 'separation of church and state,'" that the right has basically coopted religion over the last thirty years. She acknowledges that many Americans turned away from religion as their churches moved to the right in reaction to the tumult of the 1960s. But neither the religious left nor the Democratic Party did much to woo them back. The identity politics that splintered the Democratic Party for two decades also drove religion out of its politics. The women's movement in particular, with its radical fringe openly hostile to religion and its absolute focus on preserving *Roe v. Wade,* left many liberal believers with no place to go.

For those who do not share Townsend's faith and the particular social-justice mission with which many Catholics are raised, her earnest tone and frequent scriptural references may seem a bit much. But I, for one, found her style rather refreshing—liberals used to talk this way for a reason. The targets of her inquiry are too numerous for a book so short, and yet even so, the book manages—like the liturgy itself—to be repetitious in places.

Townsend is at her most persuasive when she uses beautifully rendered stories about her father for arguing that one of the highest aims of both faith and politics is to take our responsibilities to one another seriously. She writes movingly about Bobby Kennedy's famous visit to a black neighborhood in Indianapolis on the night Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Then Mayor Richard Lugar pleaded with Kennedy not to go, saying he could not guarantee his safety. Kennedy went anyway, breaking the news to a horrified crowd as he stood on the back of a flatbed truck, lanky and stoop-shouldered in the harsh glare of a television light, and spoke to their shared grief. Kennedy quoted the Greek poet Aeschylus: "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God." Kennedy's presence in that neighborhood, and his invocation of the Almighty, had a healing effect. That night riots erupted in over a hundred American cities, but Indianapolis remained calm.WM

Kukula Kapoor Glastris is books editor of the *Washington Monthly.*

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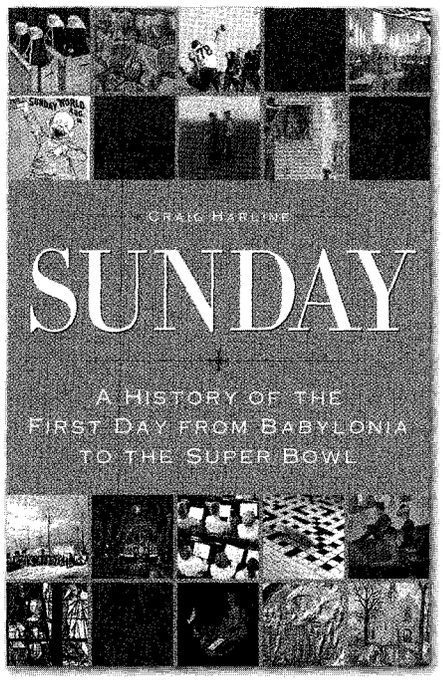
A SUNDAY MANIFESTO



Sunday: A History of the First Day From Babylonia to the Super Bowl

By Craig Harline
Doubleday, 450 pp.

What to do with that day of rest

By Jamie Malanowski

Is it a vain, demanding, aggrandizing god who demands a whole day every week be devoted to him? Or is it a modest, self-effacing god who wants just one day's worship every seven, and lets poor mortals get off their knees and go to work the other six? Is it an abundant, generous planet that allows its inhabitants a day of leisure (because Saturday, let's face it, is for schlepping the kids to soccer practice and standing on line at the Home Depot), or is a stern, withholding planet that makes us get out of bed five days a week and alienate our labor on behalf of cold, faceless corporations? Is it a selfish, avaricious football league that conquers Sunday afternoons, and then moves resolutely to take ownership of Monday nights, Sunday nights, and Thursday nights, or is it a smart, enterprising league that knows that after reading Craig Harline's *Sunday: A History of the First Day From Babylonia to the Super Bowl* I'm ready for some football?

The above seem to be the only questions about Sundays left unanswered by Harline's well-written new book. The author, a historian at Brigham Young University, offers us a shrewdly selective survey of what is, after all, a vast subject—how Sundays have been observed in Western civilization for more than 2000 years. Unsurprisingly, there's lots of information here. We learn that Sunday got its name from the Babylonians, based on some excusably faulty astronomy and a desire to connect changes in the calendar—hours, days, weeks, seasons—to the travels of the planets. We learn that the Jews were the first to sacralize one of the days, which they marked by worship and rest. Before long they were trying to figure out how to coexist with the Romans, with their famous appetites for play, and with the early Christians, who evolved from both traditions and were thus inclined to ambidextrously borrow from and reject elements, depending on whether it was in the interest of the leadership to identify with or separate from one of the groups. By the fourth century, with Christianity ascendant, things shook out in such a way that the first day of the week would be called Sun Day (Roman), and that it would be a day of rest (Jewish), but not complete rest (too Jewish). Rather, a person could rest, in order to worship.

Not to shortchange the ecstasies of prayer, but clearly the Church Fathers weren't trying to convince anybody that Christianity was the fun religion (no sex on Sundays was one of their injunctions). Not everybody bought into this program, which may explain the extravagant lengths both hard-liners and easy-goers went in later centuries to shape Sundays to their preferences. Clerics eventually felt obliged to emphasize the sacredness of Sundays by pointing out that Sunday was not only the day when Christ fed the multitudes, changed water into wine, and rose from the dead, but was also the day when God created the angels, appeared to Abraham, parted the Red Sea, handed down the Ten Commandments, ordained Aaron the first bishop, allowed Joshua to walk through the River Jordan with dry feet, and so much more. (In an odd departure, when Pittsburgh Steelers great Franco Harris performed the Immaculate Reception, it was on a Saturday.) Pushing from the other end were those who really wanted a day off from work. By the fourteenth century, innumerable churches in England and on the continent contained paintings called *The Sunday Christ*, in which Jesus was seen

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surrounded by tools—the ax, the spade, other ordinary pieces of equipment—all of which were connected by a line to a fresh wound on the Savior's body. The message: "Using these tools on Sunday only adds to Christ's suffering."

Once Harline gets us through the Reformation, he changes his approach slightly, and starts explaining how Sundays changed and evolved by taking snapshots—perhaps "deep core samples" might be a better phrase—of typical Sundays at various times and places: the rural English village Sundays of the 1300s, the proper bourgeoisie Dutch Sundays of the 1620s, the very social Sundays of fin de siècle France, the anxious Sundays in Belgium just before and during the Great War, the quiet Sundays in London between the world wars, the churchgoing, sports-loving Sundays of America in the 1950s.

These sections make up the bulk of the book, and they are what makes *Sunday* an enjoyable read. Harline uses diaries and other accounts to focus on individuals and small groups of people, bringing to life what their ordinary Sundays were like. The effect is a bit like reading an excerpt from a novel, full of color and detail, with well-described characters.

Brought to life particularly well is David Beck, a young Dutch widower whose early-seventeenth-century Sundays were spent in long religious services and even longer lonely walks. Beck was not a man who indulged in self-pity, but his sadness is thrown into stark relief when he writes about his Sunday dinner, and how the companionship of friends and family at the big evening meal serves to restore his vitality. A more delightful character is the French satirist Louis Morin, whom we meet through his 1898 book, *Parisian Sundays*. It is a set of charming, Thurberesque vignettes of the adventures of Morin and his lovely female companion, Pompon, as they enjoy the new fad of "promenading" through Paris's parks and the surrounding environs. Morin and Pompon visit cafés, dance halls, the racetrack, the beach, and the countryside—much of which we would recognize as components of a leisurely Sunday today. Louis and Pompon seem very familiar, like a movie or sitcom couple—he hapless, perturbed, curmudgeonly, she serene, indulgent, interested, and the greater lover of life. With a novelist's eye Harline drops in small poignant, and sometimes tragic, touch-

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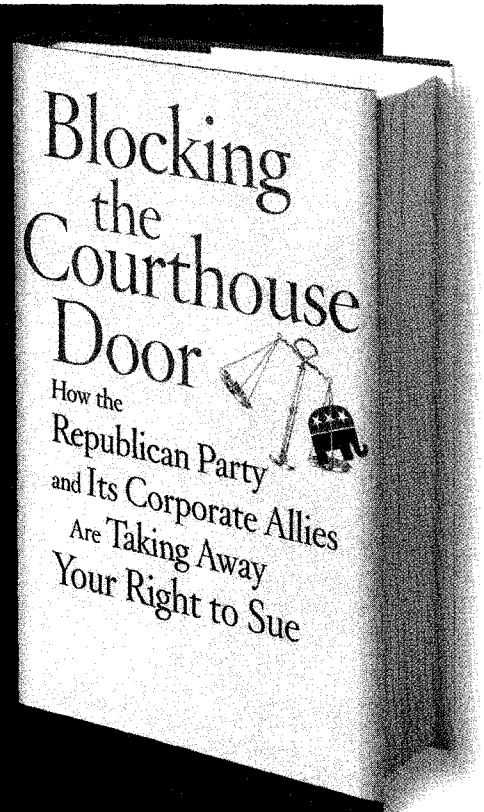

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es. David Beck dies before two of his dear friends have named their sons after him. Years after their promenading Sundays, the funny *flaneur* Morin and his charming Pompon lose a son at the bloody Battle of the Somme.

If Harline fails to deliver in one department, it's tomorrow. What does the future hold for Sundays? America is such a religious country, and Sunday is still for most Americans the day to worship. But many people successfully fit their observances into an hour or so, and then fill the rest of their Sundays with all sorts of activity, including not very restful work and not very sacred play. Custom is a powerful constraint, but one wonders if we are edging toward a time when Sunday will surrender some of its uniqueness. Since it's likely that schoolchildren will in perpetuity have weekends off, the idea of weekends and especially Sundays as family time will not easily disappear; indeed, new family-oriented traditions may arise. Organized soccer games were the centerpiece of my family's Sundays when my kids were young; the wholesomeness of that activity, the social dimension, the ability of the game to serve as the centerpiece of the day helped make those Sundays very special, and in a country that's less than soccer crazy, those games seem like a fixture. Otherwise, with the proliferation of entertainments available throughout the week and no longer reserved for Sundays, with the slow disappearance of the Sunday paper, and with work more and more sticking its nose into the home, Sundays might start to resemble the other days of the week.

It doesn't necessarily have to happen. We just need to create more artificially pumped-up occasions—like Mother's Day and Father's Day, for example. Better yet, look at Super Bowl Sunday. For years the NFL championship game was played on a wintry Sunday with minimal fanfare and hardly any guacamole. Then the networks and the entertainment industry and corporate America got behind it, and now it's a national festival, and one of the few big occasions guaranteed to take place on a Sunday. Other groups should take heed: it's time to start manufacturing Sunday events. NASCAR has done it. Others should pile on. The Oscars are big, and they're already on Sunday, but they should be bigger, a Sunday festival of the cinematic arts, with free admission all afternoon at movie theaters, and supermarkets selling Oscar-shaped molds of French onion dip (or caviar, for the truly glamorous). Come on, people—Sundays are rife for exploitation. Why do we have to sit around and celebrate old European pagan pilgrim holidays that often fall haphazardly on any old day of the week? Can't we start some Sunday festivals of our own?WM

Jamie Malanowski is the managing editor of *Playboy*. His new novel, *The Coup*, will be published by Doubleday in July.

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